

CHARACTERISTICS

OF THE

Present Political State

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

*Prisca juvent alios : ego me nunc denique natum
Gratulor.*

OVID.

THE SECOND EDITION,
With Corrections and Additions by the Author.

L O N D O N :

Printed for A. MILLAR in the Strand.
M DCC LVIII.

CHARACTERISTICS

THE

CONTENTS

THE POLICE

DEPARTMENT

A

PART I

Of British and Foreign

GENERAL PRINCIPLES



Of the various

of the various

of the various

of the various

of the various

T H E C O N T E N T S.

ADVERTISEMENT, P. I

P A R T I.

Of Banks, and of Paper-credit, 15

P A R T II.

*Of national Debts ; and of the Source of the
National Debts in England.*

SECT. 1. *Of National Debts,* 41

SECT. 2. *Of the Source of the National
Debts of England,* 53

P A R T III.

*Of National Riches ; and of the Riches of
Great Britain.*

SECT. 1. *Of National Riches in general,* 95

SECT. 2. *General Observations concerning
the present Opulence of Great
Britain,* 100

SECT. 3. *Of the Riches of North Britain,* 107
SECT.

CONTENTS.

- SECT. 4. *Objections to what has been asserted concerning the increase of Riches in North Britain considered,* — 115
- SECT. 5. *Answers to objections against what has been asserted concerning the wealth of England,* 137

PART IV.

Of the Payment of the National Debts, 157

PART V.

Of the National Genius and Capacity for Self-Defence, — 165

ERRATA.

- Page 33. last line for *of France* read *in France*.
 74. In the note, line 7. for *an* read *on*.
 81. line 18. for *no* read *not*.
 84. line 6. for *bad* read *a bad*.
 Ibid line 24. for *situation* read *situations*.
 89. line 7. for *free* read *a free*.
 96. line 22. for *ommerce* read *commerce*.
 114. line 9. for *his* read *this*.
 118. line 12. for *so poor* read *poor*.
 124. first line in the note, for *the* read *in the*.
 164. line 1. for *the* read *their*.
 167. line 7. for *the swooning* read *and of swooning*.
 174. In the note, line 7. for *the* read *that the*.
 Ibid. in the note, last line, for *this* read *his*.
 176. line 20. for *uniform* read *universal*.
 187. line 15. for *the* read *their*.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Characteristics were written in order to give a more just and a more agreeable prospect of the present state of Britain, than is to be seen in many late writings. The author hopes, they will contribute something to remove the disquiet of good citizens, and to defeat the designs of the disaffected.

HAVING conceived a very favourable opinion of the revolution in the year 1688, and of the British government ever since that period; having been confirmed in this opinion by observing the happiness of the people, and by comparing the condition of Britain with that of other nations; he has often been surprised at those loud complaints, which are made of our poverty, of our want of silver and gold, of the abuse of paper-credit, the greatness of our taxes, the loss of our trade, and the great increase of the national debts: all said to be occasioned by a series of mismanagements ever since the Revolution. Complaints of this kind tend naturally to disquiet the friends of

B

the

the constitution, and furnish its secret enemies with many topics of declamation to create and to support disaffection.

BUT, what is still more astonishing and alarming, it has been of late publicly asserted, that our national genius and capacity are almost quite gone; and that we are grown so feeble both in our counsels, and in the execution of them, that we run the greatest risk of becoming an easy prey to any bold invader.

THIS debility is *said* to flow immediately from our luxury, and from the effeminacy of our manners; but is supposed to be originally derived from the restraints laid on the royal prerogative, from the new dignity and power acquired by our parliaments, and from the accession of liberty gained by the people at the Revolution. In consequence of this alteration in our political system, our princes having too little power, and the people too much liberty; liberty has degenerated into licentiousness; and there is nothing now to be found in our constitution, able to give a sufficient check to the natural bad consequences of luxury and of effeminacy. Hence, as is asserted, we are upon the brink of a precipice, and going fast to destruction.

ADVERTISEMENT. iii

THO those gentlemen, who, on the one side, complain so loudly of our poverty, and those, who, on the other, make as loud complaints of the bad effects of our riches, are very opposite in their principles; they agree, however, in the same conclusion. The one party affirm, that we are ruined by poverty; the other impute our ruin to our riches; but both maintain, that we *are* ruined, and, in some sort, connect this ruin with the Revolution.

EXCITED by a natural curiosity to find out the truth in a matter of such importance; anxious for the welfare of his country; the author of these Characteristics set himself to enquire, whether there was just ground for such complaints; or whether the nation is not at present much richer, happier, and more powerful, than it was before the Revolution. Having examined impartially what might be said on both sides, he hath composed the little treatise that follows, and presumes to offer it to the Public at a crisis so important and so interesting.

BEING neither merchant, manufacturer, nor farmer; having no management of the revenue, nor any share in public counsels; he thinks himself obliged to own, that he

iv A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

has no other means of being instructed in the state of the nation, than such as are open to every other gentleman. He therefore brings his arguments chiefly from what is *obvious* and *visible*. It might indeed be an advantage, if either gentlemen who are conversant in commerce and manufactures, or such as are concerned in the revenue, would publish some of their anecdotes that are not among the *arcana imperii*. By a comparison of the present state of their country, with its state before the Revolution, they could easily refute those false allegations concerning its poverty. However, it may be possible to do without them. The poverty and the riches of a nation must be, in some sort, *sensible*. At least, they may be discerned by a *careful* observer. Nay, one may argue concerning them, perhaps, with greater certainty, from obvious appearances, than from the most minute accounts of taxes and of the public revenue. Of the condition of a nation in *other* respects, we must be able to form the surest judgment from what is obvious and visible.

ONE who reasons in this manner, concerning the riches or the happiness of a country, *from what is sensible*; acts much like an audience, who judge of the merit of a play, or of an oration, by their inward

ward feelings. If they find themselves greatly interested, they conclude that the poet or the orator is a master. But it will be difficult to convince them, from the rules of criticism, that a piece is excellent, if even when they are in a temper the most suited to feel the force of it, they find themselves cold and languid, notwithstanding all the efforts of the author. In like manner, it may be concluded, that when a nation is encreasing in riches, and is living at ease, the effects of its prosperity must be visible and sensible.

BUT there is scarce any audience, in which one will not meet either with some four ill-natured people, who are *fond* of finding fault; or with some, who are so full of *vanity* and *affectation*, that they like to contradict the *common* opinion; or with some, who through melancholy, or other disorders of body or mind, are not in a proper disposition to be duly affected. Something of the same kind often happens in the State. Tho the great body of the people are sensible of their own happiness, many shall be found of such sour and such peevish dispositions, or so blinded with prejudices, or so fretted by disappointments, or of such timorous and anxious tempers, that they will be continually *imagining* within them-

B 3 selves,

selves, and, if they live under a free government, and in a learned age, will endeavour by their conversation and by their writings to persuade others, that all things are in the greatest disorder, and that the happiest nation in the world is hastening to perdition.

THE good-natured part of mankind, no doubt, will agree in pitying such unfortunate and anxious citizens, for fancying to themselves so many *imaginary* evils, and for undertaking the difficult task of persuading others out of their senses, or of making a nation believe that it is extremely poor and oppressed, when, in truth, it is rich and free. But there is not the same agreement among politicians about the manner, in which such peevish writings ought to be treated. Some think it best to despise them altogether, both because they aim at an impossibility, to wit, to convince a powerful and a happy people, that they are weak and miserable; and because there is seldom any reason to hope that either the authors themselves, or such as have adopted their opinions, will ever be convinced of their errors. This is said to be the case with all controversial writers and their writings; the former are never to be convinced; the latter have no effect on either side.

The

The opinions and the principles of men are formed by other means.

BUT strong objections lie against the policy of this *principle*. Books, pamphlets, songs, are known, from experience, to have considerable influence both in forming and in confirming the opinions of mankind. They have produced signal effects in the world. It must therefore be dangerous in any Government, it must be so especially in a free one, to neglect altogether the compositions which are published without regard to the strain in which they are written. Like company, if they are of a peevish gloomy complexion, they are infectious, and tend to sour the minds of the people. Besides, the false opinions of men may be corrected, if objects are shewn them in a proper light. The world is far from being so bad as many imagine. Many have a sincere desire to find out the truth. Tho they have been blinded by prejudices, they are capable of conviction. For their sake the truth ought to be fairly exposed to public view.

IT is for these reasons, that the author of the *Characteristics* has proposed to give a more comfortable, and, as he thinks, a

more just view of the state of the Public, than is to be seen in several late writings.

THE writings, on which this author is to offer some animadversions, relate to our paper-credit, to our taxes, to the public debts, to our luxury, to our effeminacy, and to a variety of other political subjects. They have been composed with very different intentions. Some of them by friends of the Government, without any bad design; others, as it is visible, by its secret enemies, with an intention, not only to foment faction, but to promote disaffection. If we shall believe some of these writers, the nation has, ever since the Revolution, been in a poor and wretched state. It is so at present, and all things are going to ruin. Instead of silver and gold, we have nothing but paper-credit. Our *banks* are pernicious, and are signs of our poverty. Our *taxes* are heavier than we can bear. They render it impossible for us to carry on trade to advantage; they have made us lose much of it already, and as they raise the prices of provisions and labour, they must make us gradually lose the remainder of it, and be under-sold by other nations in all the markets of the world. Our *public debts* too are certain proofs of our low condition; since we are obliged to borrow, and cannot raise

raise the sums necessary for the public service, within the year. They could never have risen so high, unless we had been most miserably oppressed by the Government, and are so great, that we shall never be able to pay them : indeed, they ought not to be paid, but to be abolished at once by act of parliament ; with a few merciful exceptions, in favour of widows, of orphans, and of such others as deserve compassion. Nay, according to some of these gentlemen, our agriculture is making very slow advances. Notwithstanding all which disadvantages, they assert, at the same time, that we are swimming in all kinds of foreign luxury. Thus one sort of writers.

There are others, who go upon a different system. They confess that we are both rich and free. They even allow that we are possessed of an extensive trade, have acquired immense wealth, and enjoy the most ample liberty. But they maintain, at the same time, that our liberty has degenerated into licentiousness ; that it has produced an effeminacy of manners, extinguished the good principles, and destroyed the genius and capacity, of the nation, to such a degree, that we are now become defenceless, and run the greatest hazard of falling before the superior genius of the French.

IN opposition to both these kinds of writers, who exhibit such a disagreeable picture of the present age, the writer of the *Characteristics* endeavours to shew, That Britain is in an opulent condition at present, and has been very happy ever since the Revolution: That banking is a very profitable institution, and has greatly enriched the nation: That, tho' our taxes are high, we are much richer, than we were when they were much lower; and carry on an extensive and profitable trade: That, tho' the greatness of the public debt must be a considerable loss, we both are rich and free at present, and may continue hereafter to be rich, and to enjoy the most perfect liberty and security of any nation in the world: That the proposal to abolish the public debts, without paying them, is neither just nor profitable: That every farthing of them ought to be paid, and may be paid without any distress to the nation; and that, notwithstanding the just complaints of our luxury, effeminacy, and corruption, we have sufficient means of self-defence, and are fully able to support ourselves against the French, or any nation whatever. These are the chief topics insisted on in the *Characteristics*. The author has digested his reflections into the order, which he thinks most proper for setting the present state of the
the

the nation in a just light. He doth not intend his work as an answer to any piece whatsoever ; yet he takes the liberty to animadvert on the writings of other Gentlemen, as they chance to stand in his way, or have asserted contrary principles. Nor hath he scrupled, from fear of the imputation of pedantry, to refer to the passages of their books at the bottom of the page.

It is mean to flatter any court, any faction, or any person whatever. Therefore, how greatly soever he esteems the government or the times since the Revolution, he will be far from maintaining, either that the administration has been guilty of *no* errors since that remarkable æra; or that there is not an odd concurrence of perplexing circumstances in our present condition. Nevertheless, from a sincere love to his country, he thinks himself obliged to maintain, that, notwithstanding all errors, which either are committed by the Government at present, or have been committed by it during the last seventy years, Britain is much richer, is much more secure, and enjoys many more advantages, than in any former period : And that, notwithstanding some unlucky events and disappointments in the course of the present war, the nation is

B 6 fully

fully able to defend itself against all its enemies.

NEITHER will any, wise man, out of his zeal for the Revolution, which was founded on liberty, adopt the slavish doctrine, that a true patriot should not *take notice* of such errors as have been committed since that happy æra. On the contrary, the wisest and best friends of the Revolution will ever be the most sincere lovers of liberty. Therefore, they will be the most strenuous supporters of the liberty of the press, and will boldly maintain, against all flatterers and time-pleasers, that the people of Great Britain *have a right* to take notice of errors in the administration, to point them out to public view, and to lay them before their representatives in parliament.

BUT liberty may degenerate into licentiousness. Some discontented writers have gone too far. One ought not wantonly to suggest, that the public credit is in danger, or, like the writer of three late Essays *, to make a proposal for erecting societies, which

* The first on the public debt; the second on paper-money, banking, &c; and the third on frugality; said in the title page, to have been printed at London, 1755.

shall circulate no bank-notes, but at an advanced price. Such a proposal seems to be too assuming. It tends to create imaginary fears, gives false alarms, and can be excused only on the supposition, that it will be without effect. With how much greater prudence, as well as pious affection to his country, does the public-spirited author of the *Querist** put the following query, "Whether the credit of the public funds be not a mine of gold to England; and whether any step, that should lessen this credit, ought not to be dreaded?" How different is this gentleman from the writer of the *Three Essays*, who, with an unusual vehemence, calls upon the landed gentlemen, upon the farmers, and upon the manufacturers, to put an end to our paper-credit altogether.

It is still more dangerous and inexcusable, like the author of a late *Estimate*, to aggravate our vices and our weaknesses so much beyond the truth, as naturally tends to dispirit our countrymen, and to raise the spirits of the French. During many years, the writer of the *Characteristics* has been sorry to *read* such melancholy and unfavou-

* The no less ingenious than pious Bishop of Cloyne. See the 233d Query of the *Querist*, 5th edition, printed 1750.

xiv A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

able accounts of the state of the Public. But, after the dastardising representations given by the author of the Estimate, he could no longer forbear to *publish* his thoughts, and to draw his pen in the service of his country.

P A R T

P A R T I.

Of Banks, and of Paper-Credit.

IN order to form a true judgment of the political state of Great Britain, it is necessary to consider the nature of Paper-credit, and to enquire whether Banks are useful or dangerous to a nation.

ONE would think, the advantages of Banks must have been so manifest from *experience*, that, long before this time, no doubt could have been entertained of their usefulness. But, instead of any universal agreement in their favour, such violent prejudices have been contracted against them, that not the vulgar alone who have never considered the subject, but some very inquisitive and ingenious gentlemen, have fallen into considerable mistakes in this matter, and look on Banks as detrimental to trade and industry.

HOWEVER, as *experience* hath convinced the *trading part* of the world of the advantages of Banking; it will not be difficult to shew, *from the nature of the thing*, in what

what manner Banks become useful in commerce.

IN a nation that is chiefly addicted to agriculture and to pasturage, where the people, satisfying themselves with a simple life, and wanting only a few conveniencies, deal but little in trade and in manufactures; money will not be very necessary. Much of their commerce may be carried on by barter. But, where there is a great variety of manufactures and commodities, where all sorts of arts are encouraged, and where elegance is studied; much money will not only be *profitable*, but be *absolutely necessary* for the exigencies of the state.

HOWEVER, there *may be* too much money in a nation. And there is certainly too much, if it renders the great body of the people idle, and enables them to purchase what they want, from foreigners, without any labour or industry of their own. This was the case with Spain, two or three hundred years ago, and did great harm to that country. But it will scarce be possible to procure so much money by trade alone.

INDUSTRY and labour are far better than money, and will soon be able to procure it in exchange for commodities. Yet industry
stands

stands sometimes in need to be *quicken'd*; and money is very serviceable for this purpose.

LET us suppose, that there is a certain quantity of money and of commodities in any country. The quantity of money may be said to represent the commodities, and to determine the prices of them. The prices of *particular* commodities may vary in different circumstances; but, if the *sums* of the money and of the commodities continue much *the same*, the prices, *on the whole*, cannot much alter. In such a case, if no more money comes into the country, unless the dispositions of the people are remarkably changed by some extraordinary accident or revolution, it will be very difficult to carry on a great deal of more work on a sudden, or speedily to increase the sum of the commodities.

BUT, if a great sum of money should be brought into the nation at once, and be distributed any way whatever, provided the labouring and industrious part of the nation do not get such sums as will keep them idle; though some part of it would undoubtedly be hoarded up, and would thereby be rendered useless, yet the greatest part of it would be employed, and become useful. The great people would immediately lay

lay out part of it in adding to their houses, to their furniture, to their equipages, and to their tables. The merchants and manufacturers would employ more hands, and carry on a greater trade. The farmers would improve their lands. The graziers would breed a greater and a better stock of cattle. Every one would be enabled to spend a little more, and to carry on his business better. By these means there would be every where more labour. Of course, the commodities, or *real* riches, which are quite *different* from *money*, would be greatly increased.

AGAIN: If the stock of money should be increased by this industry: or, if *another sum* of money should be introduced by other means, and be distributed as before; this would again increase the stock of commodities. And so on continually, or to a certain limit.

Now, Banks, settled by public authority under right regulations, continually increase the current species, by issuing notes which circulate as money. By giving credit, they furnish men of substance with the means of giving greater employment to the industrious, and enable merchants to carry on a more extensive trade. The more notes
the

the Banks can circulate in this way, the more will industry and trade be promoted. Nor can there be any limit, while the borrowers from these banks can give good security, and the managers take care to issue no more notes, than, by experience they have learned, they can answer, according to the ordinary course of demand. Whatever sums landed men, merchants, or others, borrow, provided they can give good security, and borrow on reasonable prospects; this is so far from being a loss, that it increases industry and consumption. A great quantity of Bank-notes only shews, that great sums have been borrowed by one part of the nation from another, upon good security, for carrying on trade, and for other reasonable purposes: Which is so far from being either a sign, or the cause, of poverty, that it is both the sign, and a mean, of greater riches.

It is of no consequence, in this argument, that there may be more paper-money than silver and gold, and that the proportion betwixt them may not be ascertained; provided the former regulations are duly observed.

It is of no consequence that foreign nations will not take our *Bank-notes*. They will

will take our *goods*, which are produced by the circulation of these notes among ourselves.

It is of no consequence, though the value of the Bank-notes should happen to extend to a vast sum, provided the Banks, which are to answer these notes, have an equal value in coin, bullion, lands, goods, and good debts, to which there is convenient access.

It is of no consequence, though landed men mortgage part of their estates for Bank-notes, and may be said to coin their lands, and to bring them into the market. On the contrary, the more the lands of any country are *locked up*, the country must be less improved. And the more easily lands can be transferred and exchanged in commerce; industry, trade, and manufactures will be more speedily and successfully promoted.

BANKS are not only *profitable*, but may be said, in many cases, to be *necessary*. When a spirit of industry is any way excited in a nation, if, by this industry, both the commodities, and the number of the people, shall be increased, before they have much commerce with foreign nations to
fetch

fetch them money; in *such a condition*, either there *must be* a currency of Paper-credit, or the industrious part of the people will be continually obliged to use barter, which will expose them to many inconveniencies.

IN fact, we see that nations have prospered by setting up Banks. This is true of Holland, of Genoa, and of other places*; and it will be found to be true both of England and of Scotland.

By making the interest of money fall, Banks must promote industry and trade.

PUBLIC Banks are preferable to private Bankers.

IT may be observed, that Banks have greatest credit under free governments, or such as have a mixture of the aristocratical or democratical form; a strong presumption in their favour. Absolute monarchies seem hardly capable of such a wise institution.

* The author in this Essay of Banking had chiefly in his view those Banks which had been set up in North Britain. And to them alone some of his reasonings can be applied. He had no intention to consider the different constitutions of all the Banks in Europe. However, several of his observations are of a general nature, and may be applied to all Banks whatsoever.

Under

Under arbitrary governments the credit of Banks cannot be firm. Absolute princes would be disposed to lay them under contribution, and would have too ready access to their treasures. It is easy to see, how the ingenious author of the Querist would answer the 303d query, which he hath proposed*, “Whether it be possible for a “national Bank to subsist and maintain its “credit under a French government?” Perhaps, it might flourish for a *little time*, under a *very wise* and *just* prince: but it must sink under one of another character, who would be tempted to lay hold on its treasures, as our King Charles II. shut up his exchequer, and seized the money which belonged to his creditors.

IN this manner we may better account for the want of Banks and of Paper-credit in France, than by the supposition of a superior policy in that country, in order to acquire and retain greater quantities of silver and gold. Thus, the French policy in not instituting Banks, in not admitting such a

* Fifth edition, printed 1750.

No man hath explained the general nature of Banking, hath shown the advantages of Banks, and hath answered the objections against them, more concisely, and with greater force of argument, than this ingenious author; whose Querist deserves well to be perused by every lover of his country, and of mankind.

circulation of merchants bills as in England, and in not *directly* permitting lending on interest, which Mr. Hume imagines to be a mighty advantage to the French †, appears to be quite the reverse, and is truly a disadvantage, arising from the pernicious nature of an absolute monarchy.

HOWEVER, Banks, like all other political institutions, are attended with inconveniences. The four following are much insisted on.

FIRST; That too great a run may be made upon Banks, and they may not be able to answer their notes; by which many innocent persons may suffer, and a great deal of confusion may be raised in the country. But in answer: Though this indeed *is possible*, there is *little danger of its happening*; if the bank is not originally on a bad footing, and the mismanagements are not very great. Banks have continued long in Europe, without such disorders; and may be so well constituted and managed, as to prevent them in times to come.

SECONDLY; It is said, That Banks cannot be depended on during civil wars, or when a foreign enemy is in the heart of the country. But *what* can be preserved in *such* a case? Shall we make no wise establish-

† In his Political Discourse of the Balance of Trade.
ments

ments in time of peace, because we cannot secure them in time of war? 'Tis true, if we cannot defend ourselves against the French King, or the Pretender, our Banks will be of little use to us. But, in such circumstances, we must lay our account with greater losses than the loss of our Paper-credit. We should lose our more substantial riches. We should lose our religion and liberty. In short, we should be able to secure nothing but the soil of our island; and that too we should be obliged to cultivate, not for ourselves, but for others.

BESIDES these objections, which may be reckoned inconsiderable, there are two of greater importance. The one, That Paper-money prevents the acquisition of greater quantities of silver and gold. The other, That it heightens the price of labour, and therefore hurts our foreign trade. But neither of these objections rests on a solid foundation.

* SUPPOSE (says an ingenious writer *)
 “ there are twelve millions of paper, that
 “ circulate in a kingdom as money; and
 “ suppose that the real cash is eighteen
 “ millions. Here is a state, which is found

* Mr. Hume in his Political Discourse of the Balance of Trade.

by

“ by experience able to hold a stock of
 “ thirty millions: I say, if it be able to hold
 “ it, it must of necessity have acquired it in
 “ gold and silver, had it not obstructed
 “ the entrance of these metals by this new
 “ invention of Paper. *Whence would it have*
 “ *acquired that sum?* From all the king-
 “ doms of this world. *But why?* Because,
 “ if you remove these twelve millions of pa-
 “ per, money in this State is below its level
 “ compared with its neighbours, and it must
 “ immediately draw from all of them, till
 “ it be full and saturate, so to speak, and
 “ can hold no more.” This is the argument
 brought to prove that paper-money prevents
 the entrance of silver and gold. But it is too
 subtle to be convincing.

If at any period, the coin in any king-
 dom is eighteen millions, this nation may
 carry on a considerable trade, and in time
 may acquire twelve millions more in silver
 and gold, without Paper-credit. But if, at
 the time at which they have only eighteen
 millions in coin, the nation should fall into
 the use of Paper-credit, and should circulate
 a sum of twelve millions in Paper-money, in
 order to quicken industry, and to enable the
 people to carry on a more extensive trade;
 it is evident, they may carry on a greater
 trade with the *thirty millions of paper and*
 C coin,

coin, than with the *eighteen* millions of *coin alone*. And, as they don't take paper in payment from foreign nations, if they are gainers by trade, they must receive the balance in silver and gold. Consequently, the national stock must be sooner increased in the one case than the other. If we shall suppose further, that we could remove the twelve millions of paper-money, without any shock or confusion; by allowing less credit, we would only put a stop to so much industry, and would disable the people from carrying on so extensive a trade. This is not the way of bringing in either silver or gold. How is it possible, therefore, that the want of so much credit can add to the treasure of the nation in any way whatever?

THE other objection is more plausible, and is stated in this manner by Mr. Hume*:
 “ That, by increasing the current species of
 “ a country, we increase the price of labour
 “ and provisions; consequently, enable
 “ poorer nations, where labour and provisions are cheaper, to work cheaper, and
 “ undersell us at foreign markets: That this
 “ is even a necessary consequence of a great
 “ trade, whatever way it is upheld, and is
 “ inseparably connected with great plenty

* In his Political Discourse of Money.

“ of silver and gold. On which account,
 “ trade must necessarily circulate ; and the
 “ poorer nations must gradually carry it off
 “ from the richer. However, there is some
 “ comfort (it is said) in losing our trade by
 “ plenty and fulness ; but it is extremely
 “ foolish to lose it by an imaginary wealth,
 “ and artificially to increase the natural dis-
 “ advantages of plenty.”

THIS is the most plausible objection, that ever has been made against Paper-credit. But, when fully examined, it will appear to be ill founded.

CREDIT of *some kind or other* is *necessary* wherever there is much trade. In nations, where there is great simplicity of manners and little trade, there is little necessity either of borrowing, or of buying, upon credit. But as commerce is enlarged, credit must be enlarged in proportion. There can be little trade, where every one buys for ready money.

IF therefore we would increase our trade, we must submit to the disadvantages, or rather natural consequences, arising from credit ; since credit is *absolutely necessary* to an extensive commerce.

IN whatever manner this credit is given, it may be said to come in the place of money, to answer for it, or to supply the want of it. It may be reckoned money, and is truly a kind of money.

CREDIT can never be given without end. None will give credit but to men of integrity, prudence, and activity, or to men of substance. Here then are *natural* checks and limits, beyond which credit will not be extended.

REGARD being had to these *natural* limits, credit must always be useful to a nation, while it supports and increases industry and useful labour.

BESIDES the credit given by private dealers one to another, and the advantages arising from such credit, equal or greater advantages may be gained by a more regular and public credit, given by Banks under proper regulations, and established by proper authority.

THE credit of these Banks, as well as credit of all other sorts, may be said to create a new species of money; which, like all other kinds of money, must contribute to raise the prices of labour, of provisions, and of all
all

all other commodities. But this is necessary in commerce, promotes industry, and is, upon the whole, a manifest advantage.

IT may be granted therefore to Mr. Hume, that Bank-notes contribute to encrease the price of labour, and, perhaps, of all sorts of commodities. But this is not a valid argument against banking; since it is only by encreasing *industry* and *consumption*, that bank-notes increase these prices. Mr. Hume confesses, that even a greater quantity of silver and gold doth not encrease prices immediately; that a certain interval is required, before it produces this effect; that it must first quicken the diligence of every individual, before it encreases the price of labour *. In no other way can bank-notes encrease the prices of labour or of goods: Notes must, therefore, be beneficial. Nor does any other disadvantage arise from them which doth not arise equally from money. It is true, they have no *intrinsic* value; in which respect money is preferable to them. But they are equally useful in all kinds of domestic commerce. They produce as much industry, as is produced by the same quantity of money, and serve for money in every case, except in transacting with foreigners.

* In his Political Discourse of Money.

BUT might not we have the same industry *without* the notes? It is absolutely impossible. As no man can trade to so great an extent without credit, as with it; so paper, taken in payments, must go farther than money alone. When a spirit of industry is once raised, it may require a larger circulation of specie to support it, than the gold or silver in the country can supply. In this case there is an absolute necessity for Paper-credit. When there are many industrious merchants or manufacturers, who could usefully employ greater sums than they possess, or can have on credit from private hands, they can never carry their trade to the utmost length, if there is not a *Bank* for furnishing them with *this necessary* credit. It may therefore be allowed, that Bank-notes raise the prices of labour and goods; but this is not so properly the effect of the notes, as of that industry which they raise and assist, and which, with all its disadvantages, is confessed to be beneficial to a nation.

WHETHER in any one year half a million is brought into a commercial country by trade, or issued out by Banks, in notes, upon good security, it will serve for the same purposes. Part of it will be laid out in producing more of the same kinds of commodities which the country produced before; an-
other

other part in making these kinds better ; another in raising new manufactures at home ; another in procuring more foreign goods. The farmer will raise more and better grain ; the grazier breed more and better cattle ; the manufacturer make more and better cloth ; the artisan make better work, and in a greater quantity ; and the merchant will extend his foreign trade. Thus, the notes will propagate and support greater industry ; which will do greater service, by encreasing the substance of a nation, than it can do harm, by raising the prices of labour and of provisions.

BESIDES ; it is not upon the quantity of current specie *alone*, that prices depend ; they rather depend on the proportion between the number of buyers, and that of sellers. If there are more buyers than sellers, the prices rise, and rise in proportion to the greater number of buyers. When the demand is lessened, or the sellers exceed the buyers, the prices fall ; if the demand is much lessened, they fall greatly. Again, this proportion between buyers and sellers depends on a thousand accidents, that make one sort of goods more necessary, fashionable, or saleable, than another. Thus, when money abounds most, the prices of *some* things fall very low ; and when it is very scarce, the

prices of *other* things are high. The most necessary things, such as corn and cattle, will depend least upon fashion. Yet these depend upon it in *some* measure. At some times, and in some nations, greater quantities of those necessary commodities are consumed than in others. But corn, and other things that are most necessary, depend oftner upon worse and better crops and seasons, and upon the proportion between the crops of different countries.

BESIDES the quantity of money, the manners of the people have a great influence in altering the methods of living, and determining the prices of labour and of commodities. These manners are changeable, and are found very different after long intervals of time. It is commonly said, that a crown, two or three hundred years ago, served the same purposes which a pound does at present*. This is true; but not always, perhaps, in the sense in which it is commonly understood. In some cases, no doubt, one could have purchased, for one crown, as much, as he can now purchase for four. In other cases he could not. But considering the different methods of living, there is a sense in which it is *always* true. In those

* Mr. Hume's Political Discourse of Money.

days, in which a quarter of a pound was equivalent to a whole pound at present, men *needed less* than they do now. They wanted *only* corn, beef, beer, coarse cloaths and coarse furniture. A little money purchased *them*. Men of the same rank in our days want *finer* cloaths, *finer* furniture; and, *besides* corn, beef, and beer of a *better* kind, they must have spiceries, fruits, and wines; and therefore stand in need of more money to procure them. Thus, the methods of living and men's opinions are constantly changing; and a variety of circumstances, besides the quantity of current specie, contributes to make labour and provisions dearer at one time than at another.

Mr. Hume * seems to be no less mistaken in the limits, which he assigns to *trade*, than in his opinion of Banking. According to his maxims, trade gives check to itself; and there is a limit, beyond which it *cannot* be encreased. Poorer nations, that is, nations with less money or foreign commerce, can work *cheaper* than those, that are richer; and must, therefore, carry away their trade. On this head, much has been said of the dearness of labour and of provisions in England, of their cheapness of France; that the

* In his Political Discourse of Money.

French can work cheaper by a third. It is foretold that the French must gradually carry away the whole foreign trade of England; since they can undersell the English in foreign markets.

As to this particular fact, that the French work cheaper than the English, I shall not examine it. It cannot, however, be true in *all* cases. An Englishman must, no doubt, be better fed, and earns higher wages *by the day*; but he will work many things *by the piece*, as cheap, or cheaper than a Frenchman. He works harder, and can do more work in the same time. Further, there are places in Britain and Ireland, where provisions are as cheap as in France. But, be this as it will, and though it should be granted, that, in several cases, poorer nations will work cheaper, and be able to undersell those that are richer; richer and more commercial nations will, in general, be able to make many things, which poorer nations either cannot make at all, or cannot make so well. Hence they may maintain a greater foreign trade, notwithstanding a greater quantity of money. Trade is, indeed, limited, because the earth and every thing in it are limited. One nation can never extend its trade *in infinitum*, or over all the earth. But a richer nation, by a proper management, may always

2

ways

ways maintain its superiority in trade over a poorer. Nay, a greater quantity of money or credit, instead of being a loss, will often be an advantage in this view. It will enable richer merchants, both to purchase, and to sell greater quantities of goods; of consequence to purchase and sell them cheaper than poorer merchants. It is not evident either from reason or from experience, that there must be an equilibrium in trade, as in fluids. One may easily account, from other principles, for the circulation of trade, and for its shifting its seat from one nation to another.

BUT, in truth, neither the riches, nor the happiness of a nation depends so much on foreign trade, as many merchants are apt to imagine. Though such gentlemen are better furnished, than others, with the knowledge of *particular* facts, they are often misled by prejudices, are too confined in their views, and too much consider their own particular traffic. After all that they have asserted concerning the necessity of foreign trade, it may justly be maintained, that such a nation as Britain, with a large territory, may be great and flourishing, may be more powerful than ever it has been hitherto, by industry and domestic commerce, without an extensive foreign trade; since its lands might be so

much better cultivated, than they have ever been, and so many new manufactures might be established, as could support, double, nay, perhaps triple, the number of its present inhabitants.

A nation, where the people are not bred to war, but are chiefly employed in agriculture, manufactures, and other arts of peace; if they lye on a continent, where their neighbours have great standing armies, they also must have a standing army, or a very good militia, to defend them from foreign invasions. If they possess an island, such as Britain, and have not a great standing army, or a good militia, they must have as much foreign or domestic trade, as will enable them to support a good navy for their security. Foreign trade is likewise an advantage in other respects. It opens an easy communication with all parts of the globe. It gives us the means of enlarging our knowledge of nature and of mankind, and of acquiring a share of the riches of every nation. If it be managed with wisdom, it may be a more speedy mean of acquiring wealth than domestic commerce alone. If there are no mines in a country, without foreign trade it cannot have either silver or gold. But such an island as Britain, can never be said to depend chiefly on its foreign trade for its great-

greatness and riches. A nation, whose territory is so small, that its native produce is not sufficient to feed and cloath its inhabitants, cannot subsist without a foreign trade. The British are in different circumstances. Their island is more than sufficient to feed and to cloath its inhabitants, though they were much more numerous than they are. No doubt they will be the better for some foreign delicacies and ornaments. They will stand in need of some foreign materials for improving their domestic commerce. But these can be procured without an *extensive* foreign trade. If the people be generally industrious in improving their lands, and in making the best use of the produce of their own island, they may both become very numerous, and enjoy the comforts of life in great plenty, with little foreign trade. This is made out by the author of the *Querist* beyond the possibility of a reply. This is confessed by Mr. Hume * ; who acknowledges, that, when industry and manufactures are once introduced into a nation, they may lose most of their foreign trade, and continue, notwithstanding, a great and powerful people. Nay, this gentleman scruples not to affirm, that the disadvantages to the foreign trade of England, arising from the high

* In his Political Discourse of Commerce.

price of labour, are not to be put in competition with the happiness of so many millions of the commons of England, with whose superior riches, above those of any other people, the high price of labour is so closely connected.

SUCH a maxim is suitable to a humane disposition. Agreeably to such a benevolent sentiment, we ought to extend our notions of trade, and consider not only *how much money* it gains to a nation, but how far it is *conducive to the happiness* of the people. That government and policy is best, where most people are most happy and easy. Neither government nor trade ought to be managed with the *sole* view of procuring vast riches to a *few*, at the expence of *grinding* the faces of the poor, and of rendering the labouring people, who are the great body of a nation, miserable. The systems of too many, both merchants and landed gentlemen, tend to no other purpose. While such gentlemen swim in luxury, and *have more than heart could wish*, they grudge a small pittance to the lower classes of mankind. We ought to propose more *equitable* and more *merciful* schemes. By considering things in this light, we may see, how much the policy of England is preferable to that of France.

It is not proposed to compare the taxes of England with those of France, or to determine, which of them are highest, or imposed with the greatest judgment. When the expences of the French armies and government are so great, when such vast sums are actually levied, when both the people and their parliaments make such loud complaints of their taxes being so burdensome, it is scarce to be conceived, that the difference in the price of labour and of provisions in France and in England should arise from the *difference of taxes*. So far as it is real, it arises from *another* source. The English gentry in general are richer than the gentry in France, excepting those of very high rank. The *middling* people in England are richer than those of the same rank in France. The *commons* in France are much poorer, and *live* more poorly, than the commons in England. Riches are *more universally* diffused in England, than in France. Wherever this is to be found, *ceteris paribus*, prices must be higher. Hence, the difference in the prices of labour and of provisions in France and in England is chiefly owing to the poverty of the commons in France, and to the riches of the commons in England: a truth, which ought to be acknowledged for the honour of English policy. Accordingly, Mr. Hume *

* In his Political Discourse of Commerce.

confesses, that the great advantage of England above any nation at present in the world, or that appears in the records of any story, consists in the riches of its artisans and common people ; which, in his esteem, is most suitable to human nature, augments the power of the State, makes the burden of taxes feel light on every shoulder, and ought to endear to Englishmen that free government under which they live. Thus, were we obliged to make a choice, compassion, as well as good policy, might engage us to prefer a scheme, by which the *bulk* of a people will be easy, to another, that bears hard upon the *multitude*. But, in truth, England may have abundance of foreign trade, notwithstanding the higher price of labour. An extensive foreign trade is the natural consequence of a great domestic commerce ; since it is scarce possible, that an industrious nation, consisting of ten millions of people, should not work up many commodities, which they do not want at home, and should not exchange them for the commodities of foreign nations.



P A R T II.

Of National Debts; and of the Source
of the National Debts in England.



S E C T. I.

Of NATIONAL DEBTS.

THE case of public banks and that of public debts seem to be very different. In a commercial nation the institution of banks, if not absolutely necessary, is, at least, of great advantage. As it keeps the money always encreasing, it is calculated, in the nature of the thing, to promote industry and trade. But public debt can never be profitable in its own nature, tho' it may sometimes be both necessary, and attended with accidental advantages.

THE custom of hoarding up, in the publick treasuries, great sums of money, which prevailed much in ancient times, and is so
highly

highly applauded by Mr. Hume *, has, at first view, a very specious appearance. It was indeed suited to nations, which, like those of antiquity, lived in simplicity, and had a greater turn to agriculture and pasturage, than to trade †.

IF a nation had few commodities or manufactures to export, it was necessary for it to have a good stock of money to purchase corn in times of scarcity. If one, that was chiefly addicted to agriculture, aspired at foreign conquests, it was necessary for it to have great sums of money provided beforehand, in order to enable it to send an army into another country.

THO such nations may consist of a greater number of people in the same extent of ground, than nations, which have more money, and carry on a greater foreign trade; tho by their labour and industry at home they may have all the conveniencies of life in great abundance; tho they may be more able to defend themselves against an invasion, and may be stronger at home, than a peo-

* In his Political Discourse of Public credit.

† See a Dissertation on the numbers of mankind, in ancient and modern times. Page 95, 96, &c. to 104. See also the Appendix to that Dissertation, Page 270, 271, 272.

ple addicted to trade ; yet they cannot raise such great taxes, nor raise them so easily and speedily, as commercial nations. Consequently, they cannot maintain such great armies abroad, and may often be less significant in the scale of nations for maintaining the balance of power. They must, therefore, be extremely frugal. So the Public must lay up great sums of money for purchasing provisions in times of scarcity, or for their warlike expeditions, if they resolve not to live on plunder, and to force their subsistence wherever they go ; which will often prove a very dangerous experiment.

BUT nations, which carry on a great trade, and have much money, as they can raise greater taxes more speedily, and with less burden to the people, are not obliged to the same rules of frugality. Nay, hoarding up great sums of silver and gold in the public treasury will often be a loss to the Public. In place of such a policy, it will be better if the Government levy no greater taxes than are necessary for the present exigencies of the State, and leave as much money, as possible, in the hands of the people, to enable them to carry on a more extensive trade. Hoarding up money in the public treasury is like a private man's locking up
great

44 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

great sums in his chest, which he might lay out to advantage upon interest, or in trade.

For this reason, the great quantities of plate, that are said to be in France in the churches and private houses, cannot be of any advantage in trade. What neither circulates, nor is a fund of credit, can have no influence in commerce. The French could carry on a much greater trade, if all this plate were circulating. The British too could carry on a greater trade, if every man possessed of plate would either employ it in trade, or lend it to such as would. In this respect the English and Dutch, who encourage services of china and other earthen ware instead of services of plate, act more in the true spirit of trade, than the Genoese. For the same reason, the tax on plate can hardly be reckoned impolitic * ; since, by lessening the quantity of plate, it prevents the want of bullion for the necessary exigencies of the State. In general, it is both sounder and more merciful policy (as Sir Matthew Decker maintains in his Essay on trade) to lay taxes on articles of luxury rather than upon the necessities of life.

* Mr. Hume suspects, that the tax on plate is impolitic in Great Britain. See his Discourse on the Balance of trade.

ON the same ground, one cannot see the advantage of such banks as Mr Hume proposes, which lock up all the money, give out paper instead of it, and never augment the circulating coin *. If there is no other secret in the bank of Amsterdam, if all those vast treasures, which have been laid up in its dark caverns from time to time, have remained untouched hitherto, it seems to be altogether unsuitable to the policy of such a mercantile people †.

AFTER all, a poorer State chiefly addicted to agriculture and pasturage, and less employed in procuring the *elegancies and ornaments* of life by an extensive trade, may be, in many respects, preferable to a richer commercial nation. The inhabitants of such a *poorer* country may be more *numerous*,

* In his Political Discourse of Money.

The writer of these Characteristics does not mean, that such Banks may not be attended with several advantages. Undoubtedly, by the circulation of their notes, instead of the money given in and locked up, commerce may, in some respects, be rendered both more easy, and more safe. His meaning only is, that these, and perhaps other advantages, do not appear to be so considerable, as when Banks are authorised to lend upon good security, either to private persons, or to the Public.

† The author of the Querist puts a very proper query on this head, "Whether money lying dead in the bank of Amsterdam would not be as useless as in the mine?" 5th edition 1750, query 242.

more

46 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

more *healthy*, and more *virtuous*. They may, by being more warlike, be more able to defend themselves at home; and may likewise be abundantly provided with the real *necessaries* and *conveniencies* of life. In such circumstances they may adopt every frugal scheme. They will not need Paper-credit, and but very little money. At the same time, they may be very *happy*; happier, perhaps, than richer commercial nations. But, if they will not be satisfied with simplicity; if a people must have *delicacies* and *ornaments*, and the trade and manufactures that are *necessary* to procure them; they must not exclude those maxims, that are suitable to such an end. It is ridiculous to be perpetually extolling trade and manufactures, while we are constantly railing at what is evidently connected with them, or necessary to procure them. This is to act inconsistently, and to aim at impossibilities.

TAKING things in this view, it may be easily demonstrated, that public debts are not so disadvantageous in rich commercial nations, as in nations where the agriculture bears a greater proportion to the trade and manufactures.

A private man may be obliged to borrow,
and may borrow with great advantage to his
private

private affairs. The same thing holds in the case of a nation. If the Government has some grand and useful scheme in view, either to drain marshes, to render rivers navigable, to encourage some branches of industry, or to maintain their liberty or trade against a powerful and ambitious enemy, and cannot raise the necessary sums by taxes in due time; it may be prudent to borrow the money, and to establish a proper method of repaying it at leisure *. If the people have confidence in the Government, the securities given by the Public, bearing a certain interest, may not only become a fund of paper-money, which may easily be transferred from hand to hand, but become *so convenient* for merchants or others, that they may very reasonably rise above par. Thus there may be a solid foundation for stocks or public funds. Merchants, having part of their estates in the stocks, which they can command at pleasure, may either be *more ready*, than it would be *possible* for them *otherwise* to be, for any profitable adventure

* It is not therefore universally true, That a nation ought never to borrow, but always to raise within the year the money necessary for the current service. This is a good general rule; perhaps it ought seldom to be departed from. But, in several cases, it may neither be possible nor be expedient.

in trade ; or, if no such adventure offers, may have a moderate interest for their money. In this there is a manifest advantage. Without doubt, the trade of England has been *promoted*, and its merchants had advantages from the nature of their stocks, above those of other nations *.

* The following queries, proposed by the ingenious Bishop of Cloyne, serve to illustrate the nature of public funds, and shew, that what originally flowed from necessity and want, may afterwards become beneficial to the State.

Query 233. Whether the credit of the public funds be not a mine of Gold to England ? And whether any step, that should lessen this credit, ought not be dreaded ?

Query 234. Whether such credit be not the principal advantage that England hath over France, I may add, over every country in Europe ?

Query 235. Whether by this the Public is not become possessed of the wealth of foreigners, as well as natives : and whether England be not, in some sort, the treasury of Christendom ?

And afterward, treating of the bank of Amsterdam, he asks,

Query 296. Whether it be not the greatest help and spur to commerce, that property can be so readily conveyed, and so well secured by a *compte en banc*, that is, by only writing one man's name for another's in the bank-book ?

Query 297. Whether at the beginning of the last century, those, who had lent money to the Public during the war with Spain, were not satisfied by the sole expedient of placing their names in a *compte en banc*, with liberty to transfer their claims ?

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 49

IT is evident likewise, that the schemes, carried on by the money thus borrowed by the Public and become a part of the National Debts, may so much *promote the trade and riches* of the nation in certain cases, that, by a moderate tax upon the additional riches, a sum may be raised sufficient both to pay the yearly interest, and gradually to repay the principal.

IT is true, some moneyed men, who have large shares in the stocks, may give over trade, and satisfy themselves with the interest of their money on government-securities. This may often be a loss; and, when it

Query 298. Whether the example of these easy transfers in the *compte en banc* thus casually erected, did not tempt other men to become creditors to the Public, in order to profit by the same secure and expeditious method of keeping and transferring their wealth.

Query 299. Whether this *compte en banc* hath not proved better than a mine of gold to Amsterdam?

Query 300. Whether that city may not be said to owe her greatness to the unpromising accident of her having been in debt more than she was able to pay?

Much to the same purpose says a celebrated French author, speaking of England, "It will have a sure credit, as it will borrow within itself, and pay itself. It may happen, that it will undertake enterprizes above its natural strength, and improve against its enemies those immense fictitious riches, which the confidence reposed in, and nature of its government will render real."

De l'Esprit des Loix, tome i. liv. 19. chap. 27.

D

hap-

happens, I shall not cavil with any of our writers about a name, and call these gentlemen merchants *. But such gentlemen may have got their *money as honestly*, as others have got their *lands*: they may *use* it as *honestly*, and with *as much advantage* to the public. If some of them take undue advantages of rising or falling stocks to gain exorbitant profits, or take undue methods to raise the stocks; they may not perhaps do more harm than *landed* men by raising their rents too high, by squeezing their tenants, by *boarding up* their corn in times of scarcity, and by grinding the faces of the Poor. *Landed* men ought to be cautious of proposing to abolish the public debts by a law, or taking away the estates of the stock-jobbers, *as idle and useless member of the State*. If ever all *rich, idle, useless* members of the society should be punished, stockjobbers would not be the *only sufferers*.

■ It is not easy to assign limits, or to determine, how far a nation may go in borrowing. Neither, indeed, would it be good policy. It is much better to keep far on the safe side, and never to *stretch* the public credit. But, certainly, the limits for such a rich commercial nation as Britain, extend

* The writer of the Three Essays refuses to call them merchants.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 51

farther than many have imagined. Dr. Davenant, in the end of the last century, when the public debts were about fourteen millions, was positive, that, if they were suffered to rise higher, nay, if they were not gradually cleared, England must be undone †.

† 'Tis in vain for the author of the Three Essays (pag. 15, 16.) to pretend, that this prediction has been verified by the change, which has happened in the property of the lands of England since the Revolution: A change so great, that he imagines a greater would not have happened even after a Turkish conquest! 'Tis evident, Davenant had no view to changes of this nature; he meant, that the lands would be much worse cultivated, whoever had the property; that the inhabitants would be greatly diminished, and would become poor. In this sense, which is the true one, the prediction has failed. Davenant was a man of more sagacity, than to consider the *change of hands*, and the shifting of property, as a certain indication of decline. This is often the symptom of the encrease of trade and riches (as shall be shewn afterwards.) It often happens under the best and happiest governments. But, if Britain was to be overrun by a Turkish or absolute Monarch; if we were to lose our liberty and free government; all the mischiefs that were predicted by Davenant, and many others, would happen. At the same time, the property of lands might remain more fixed, than when trade and riches were encreasing. Hardly, indeed, could there be any cause of altering property, but the arbitrary will of the tyrant. The monarch, indeed, might take an estate from one of his slaves, and bestow it upon another. But, amidst the oppressions and insecurity under such a government, we cannot suppose such a quick encrease of riches, as would enable the Industrious to purchase estates so fast, as in times of greater liberty and security.

52 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

Yet we have seen them rise to thrice that sum, while the nation is become richer than it was before.

HOWEVER, there must certainly be a limit : No nation can contract debts without end. Public debts may be too high. One may be authorized to say, the debts of Britain are *high enough* at present ; since the legislature appears evidently to be of this opinion, and seems anxious to have them reduced.

SECT.

S E C T. II.

Of the SOURCE of the NATIONAL DEBTS of England.

WHEN we consider the vast debts, that have been contracted in England; in one view, it seems impossible intirely to justify the conduct, which has been the cause of them; in another, such high debts are not a bad symptom of the times, and mark a peculiar distinction betwixt the temper of the nation before and since the Revolution.

WHEN a free government is able to contract great debts by borrowing from its own subjects, this is a certain sign, that it has gained *the confidence* of the people. If foreigners are eager to have a share of its funds, this shews the confidence of the *neighbouring nations*. If it be true, that the people of Britain have entrusted the Government with more than sixty millions, and foreigners with more than twenty, such a Government must have *a firm credit*. 'Tis by this firm credit, among other things, that the Government ever since the Revolution has been remarkably distinguished from the Government during the four preceding reigns.

54 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

How often have we been told, with a particular emphasis, That all our debts have been contracted since the Revolution? To such, as know the history of former times, the mention of this is unnecessary. None of the four preceding reigns had *any credit* with the people. Before the Revolution the nation could place no confidence in the administration; for they were continually giving them ground of jealousy, and were secretly undermining, or openly invading, their constitution.

How openly did James the First of England propagate a slavish system, as the true system of the British government. "The absolute
 " power of kings; their hereditary, indefea-
 " sible, irresistible, divine right; the rights of
 " their subjects being originally derived from
 " their grace and favour, and being revok-
 " able at their pleasure, or in cases of neces-
 " sity, of which they themselves were the sole
 " judges; their right to levy money at their
 " pleasure, and in what manner they found
 " most expedient, without consent of par-
 " liament; their right to prescribe to the
 " consciences of their subjects, at least to re-
 " gulate all external forms and ceremonies
 " in religion by their sovereign will and au-
 " thority; their right to call members of
 " parliament to account, to try, judge, and
 " punish

“punish them at common law, for their
 “speeches in parliament:” these, and such
 like slavish principles, were common to-
 pics of his conversation. He inculcated them
 upon his courtiers. He talked of them open-
 ly at table. He could scarce conceal them
 from his parliaments, and made an assent and
 consent to these slavish doctrines the high
 road to honour and preferment.

DURING the reign of Charles I. the rights of
 the subjects were so openly violated, as gave
 an universal disgust, and made the king lose
 the confidence of his people. Charles him-
 self entertained too high an opinion of the
 authority of kings. Nor need we be sur-
 prised that the nation was extremely
 alarmed, after seeing the court discover so
 strong an inclination to rule without parlia-
 ments, and take such wide steps, to establish
 an arbitrary government, both in church and
 state.

WHEN we reflect on the attempts, that
 were made against our freedom during this
 reign, we ought not to be ungrateful to the
 memory of those generous patriots, who, in
 opposition to an arbitrary court, so bravely
 asserted the cause of liberty, and maintained
 the rights of the people. We ought to ap-
 plaud that valour and love to their country,

56 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

which shone conspicuously in their character. But as an enormous ambition and enthusiastic rage at length mixed in their counsels, and hindered them from finishing happily what they had so gloriously begun; in so far they deserve to be condemned; nor could they ever obtain a firm credit with the people.

It is needless to enter minutely into the spirit of those times. One would not be fond of bringing too severe an accusation against the two first kings of Great Britain. At the same time, many of their measures cannot possibly be defended. Whatever were the virtues of those princes as men, as kings they manifestly aimed at arbitrary power. Whatever were the crimes and weaknesses of those who opposed them, a warm opposition in those two reigns seems to have been necessary for preserving British liberty. It is extremely difficult to be wholly impartial. Mr. Hume * has not been able to hinder himself from shewing a visible bias in favour of King Charles I. and of the party who supported him; and against the zealous defenders of civil and religious liberty. It is very possible, that I am biassed on the other

* In the History of Great Britain, vol. I.

side. The religious Puritans of those days had great weaknesſes ; but thoſe weakneſſes were more excuſable than the ſuperſtitious bigotry of Charles's court and miniſters. Thoſe who govern ought to be wiſer than the people who are governed. In matters of religion, ſuch as have authority ought to ſhew indulgence to ſcrupulous conſciences. But the court of King Charles I. knew nothing but ſeverity. Contrary both to juſtice and to good policy, they embroiled the nation for the ſake of *ſome unneceſſary ceremonies* in worſhip. The defenders of civil liberty, no doubt, fell into great exceſſes, and carried their claims too far. But our hiſtorian treats them with a ſeverity not agreeable to that gentleneſs which he uſually exerciſes towards political miſtakes. It is even with caution, according to Mr. Hume, that we ought to aſcribe the praiſes of a good citizen to *Hamden*, tho celebrated by hiſtorians of the moſt *opposite* parties, for virtue and integrity in private life, affability in converſation, penetration and diſcernment in counſel ; temper, art and eloquence in debate ; induſtry, vigilance and enterprize in action ; and valour in war *. Nay, ſo cautious is the hiſtorian, that he ſcruples to determine poſitively, whe-

* Hiſtory of Great Britain, vol. I. p. 353.

58 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

ther this generous lover of liberty was actuated by private ambition, or by honest prejudices. How much more generously would he have been treated by the nobler antients, who would not have scrupled to bestow the highest praises on his heroic patriotism, and would have consecrated his name with the Aristides's, the Brutus's, and the Cato's of the ancient world.

IN judging of the merit of ancient parties, it is not equitable to compare *their* principles and manners with those of a *more enlightened age*. This is not the surest way of forming a sound judgment of their pretensions. To do justice to our brave forefathers, we should not compare *their* spirit and opinions with the opinions and spirit of *our* times, but with those of their cotemporaries and antagonists. We should consider the necessities to which they were reduced, and what spirit was suitable to the age in which they lived. Times of civil war and fierce dissension about religion, notwithstanding the courage and military bravery which they tend to produce, notwithstanding that noble ardor for liberty, and fervent zeal for religion, with which many are remarkably inspired, may justly be called unfortunate to those that live in them. Besides the external calamities of war, with which the world is afflicted
in

in such times, they beget an uncommon keanness, if not acrimony, of temper. We need not, therefore, wonder so much, as Mr. Hume, that our generous ancestors, who were engaged in such arduous conflicts, carried some things too far; and that their genius, tho' suitable to those fierce times in which Providence had cast their lot, appears so different from the milder and more sociable spirit of the present age.

KING Charles II. had reigned but a short time after his restoration, when he lost the confidence of his subjects. The restoration of this prince in so hasty a manner, without some such solemn declarations of the rights of the nation by parliament, as were afterwards made at the Revolution, can be justified only by the *necessity* of a speedy settlement at that time. Such an entire confidence was not a little dangerous. The true friends of liberty soon had reason to repent of their complaisance. This indolent and inactive prince discovered that he inherited the principles of his father; tho' he would neither run the risk, nor take the trouble of establishing his favourite system. Guided by French and popish counsels, he soon lost the hearts of his people. How poorly did he shut up his exchequer, to avoid paying a million and a half of debt, that he might be better able

60 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

to assist the French to conquer the Dutch, contrary to the interest of the Nation! What unjust, severe, and foolish attempts were made in his reign, as well as in his father's, to settle what will always be impossible to settle, in a free and protestant country, an *exact uniformity* in matters of religion! But severity to protestant dissenters, and a secret management in favour of the church of Rome, were prevailing maxims in those two reigns.

THE designs of his successor James II. to establish an arbitrary government, and to restore popery, were visible to the whole nation, opened the eyes of the people, and brought about the Revolution.

WHAT confidence could the nation place in princes of such characters, who were continually struggling with their parliaments, and discovered a manifest inclination to be free of them altogether! What *wise* men would have *trusted* such princes with their money! None of the four princes before the Revolution had *credit* enough to obtain such great sums as the people have chearfully contributed since that memorable æra.

THIS confidence of the people arises from the most obvious and palpable appearances,
I
and

and is founded on the most just and reasonable grounds. Since the Revolution, our princes have avoided those rocks on which their predecessors ran with precipitation. The British have enjoyed greater liberty and security than were enjoyed in the preceding reigns. The great body of the people find themselves easy and safe. The administration is equitable and mild. The Sovereign summons the parliament regularly, according to law. The king and his parliament meet and part amicably. They enact such laws as are thought proper. Sometimes the landed, sometimes the trading interest, is more immediately considered. Great regard is paid to the general opinion of merchants and of the people. If they are offended at any law that has been enacted ; if *designing* men have raised a clamour, and rendered the people uneasy ; such is the lenity of the British government, such their regard to the voice of the Public, that, tho the people, perhaps, had no just reason to have been uneasy on account of the law itself, yet if this law was not thought of importance enough to justify the suffering them to remain uneasy under it, it has been known, that, the very next session of parliament, the ministry have made the motion to repeal it. Instead of flagrant attempts to stretch the prerogative, as in former times, the people
can

62 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

can see nothing but legal government. If it is doubted, whether the King can execute any particular, necessary, or salutary project, by virtue of his prerogative, instead of urging the *plea of necessity*, as was frequently done before the Revolution, or catching at such an opportunity for *enlarging the prerogative* without law; a bill is immediately brought into *parliament* to explain, or to enlarge the powers of the Crown. Amidst affected cries of slavery and oppression by the disaffected or discontented, no body can observe instances of this oppression. Every industrious man is able not only to live by his industry, but to live in much greater plenty, than in France, or under any absolute monarchy. He finds, indeed, the prices of many things higher, than they were in former times; whether from taxes, or for other reasons, he does not perhaps inquire. Neither does he calculate, how much he pays towards clearing the public debts. But, without any such calculation, he finds more money to pay those higher prices, and sees that every one may *live happily* under a *gentle* administration, and the protection of law. Such a concurrence of favourable circumstances makes the people easy. They have *confidence* in the government, and are not to be moved either by the alarms given by the timorous or discontented, or by the arts of
the

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 63

the disaffected, and their studied representations of oppression and poverty amidst the greatest liberty and plenty.

BUT have there been *no* mismanagements under the government since the Revolution? Has this government fallen into *no* errors? Has it been guilty of *no* abuses? Whatever may be said by fawning parasites, the best friends of the Revolution will not say so. They do not doubt, that men without virtue, or without ability, have too often been employed; that such men have mismanaged public affairs, and embezzled the public money; that frauds have been committed; that services have been paid for, which were never performed; that others have been purchased at an extravagant price; that many deceitful arts have been employed in the management of the stocks; and that such abuses have too seldom been punished. Though they are far from believing that the balance of power in Europe is an idea *entirely imaginary*, they will not assert, that we have not burdened ourselves *too much* to preserve it. Far are they from thinking, that *all* our foreign wars and negotiations have been conducted with the *greatest* skill and ability; that our taxes have been imposed with the *deepest judgment*; that our revenues have been managed with the *strictest frugality*.
They

64 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

They cannot believe, that, if the administration since the Revolution had been entirely patriot and frugal, the public debts would have risen so high, or not have been sooner reduced. All human governments are subject to abuses. The government, since the Revolution, has not been exempted from them. Generous friends of liberty will not deny it. They will not prostitute their honour. They will not defend what is wrong. When they celebrate the government since the Revolution, they do not celebrate it on account of *the frugality* of the administration, or the watchfulness of men in power, either in preventing or in punishing abuses. What they celebrate is of a different nature. By the Revolution the constitution has been rendered more perfect. That admirable and singular mixture of a hereditary limited monarchy and splendid aristocracy, without the power of oppressing, and of an equal democracy without its unsteadiness and confusion, shines with superior lustre. By means of the Revolution, the protestant religion, which seemed continually to be in danger from the influence of popish kings or popish queens, is perfectly secured. By means of the Revolution, we enjoy an entire security from all kinds of persecution, liberty of worshipping God according to our consciences, safety to our persons against arbitrary

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 65

bitrary imprisonments, security of our lives and properties from arbitrary judgments, freedom from all taxes, penalties or punishments, without consent of parliament, liberty of speech and debate, of writing and printing, in the most ample manner we can desire. These are blessings which we have possessed more abundantly than ever we did before. Such perfect liberty and security have given so great encouragement to industry and trade, that, notwithstanding our high taxes and great national debts, we are much richer and more powerful, than before the Revolution.

THO the true friends of liberty will never deny weaknesses in the administration, they cannot but see, at the same time, that many of the abuses which they confess and lament, naturally arise from the freedom of our government, and are evils nearly connected with the blessings we enjoy above most other nations. There can be no unmixed happiness in this world. A nation cannot have *just enough* of any thing, and no more. If it enjoys a sufficient measure of liberty, it must be content to take along with it a certain portion of licentiousness. If it will have the *most perfect* security against illegal imprisonments or arbitrary judgments, it must lay its account to suffer many criminals to escape. If

66 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

If it would preserve the influence, dignity, and independance of the rich, and not break the spirit of the commons, it cannot expect to be without parties and factions. Wherever there are struggles and contests for power and authority, *dishonourable* as well as *honourable* methods of acquiring them will too often come into vogue. Where power is divided among many different persons and bodies of men, the distribution is the great mean of preserving freedom, and of preventing those enormous acts of tyranny, which are exercised under absolute monarchies. But it often embarrasses the administration, and makes the springs of government move more slowly. A king of Britain, as he cannot do the thousandth part of the mischief which may easily be done by an absolute monarch, sometimes cannot do so much good. His best intentions may be frustrated by contending parties *. Where there

* As it can rarely be supposed, that absolute monarchs will be disposed to do good in any extraordinary degree; as they are surrounded with flatterers from their birth, and their education seldom tends either to give them the largest views of what is best, or best disposes them to pursue it; as they must be often misled, by their courtiers, to prefer other considerations to the general interest of their subjects; as there are indeed but few examples of absolute princes who have been *eminently* good, and every absolute prince is capable of doing the greatest mischief; absolute monarchy always has been, and always must be, the greatest
are

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 67

are parties and factions, it is no wonder that persons, whose greatest merit consists in their powerful connexions, are sometimes chosen into offices. No form of government can have all advantages. The best is that which has the most and the greatest. If a nation will have moneyed men and rich merchants, who shall be able both to carry on a great trade, and to advance money for the urgent occasions of the government, it must admit stock-jobbing. If it will preserve a due balance of power abroad, and baffle the unjust attempts of an ambitious monarch, who disturbs the peace of mankind, encroaches on his neighbours, and would enslave the world, it must sometimes put itself to the expence of maintaining armies for its defence. If it is more rich and opulent, the administration *must* be more expensive, and must pay all its officers and servants at a much greater rate, than other nations *. Thus we may easily

scourge of mankind. According to Mr. Hume (in his Political Discourse of Commerce) "the poverty of the common people is a natural, if not an infallible, consequence of absolute monarchy." In this view, it is the best policy for nations to set proper bounds to the power of their kings. This the British have happily effected, and have established the wisest monarchy that ever was in the world.

* Mr. Hume has observed (in his Political Discourse of Money) that all rich trading countries, from Carthage to Britain and Holland, have made use of mercenary troops; that the pay of all servants in rich countries must rise in proportion to the public opulence;

see

68 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

see the original source of many abuses, that are justly complained of.

“ KING William’s wars! King William’s wars!”——A great topic of declamation to such as are disaffected. It must be owned, that it is scarce possible, without knowing many secret transactions, to explain the reasons, and to shew the necessity of foreign wars. But those entered into by King William immediately after the Revolution, and that projected by him a little before his death, as far as the Public can judge, seem to have been undertaken upon the most honourable occasion*. It was *glorious* for the nation to chastise the pride of an ambitious monarch, who had assisted King James with his fleets and armies, and, like a despotic master, would force the British to submit to a Prince whom they had

and that our small army in Britain of twenty thousand men is maintained at as great expence, as a French army thrice as numerous. Therefore, according to this writer, we ought not to expect to be as frugal as the French, till the commons of England shall be as poor as those of France.

* We find a very absurd assertion (in the Three Essays, page 11.) That it is the interest of landed men and merchants to submit to any insult, rather than engage in a war; since they must bear the whole burden of it.

proscribed †. It was *generous* to make an atonement to Europe for the weaknesses of Charles II. not only in suffering, but in assisting, the haughty Lewis to trample on the faith of treaties, and on the rights of nations. It was *necessary* for their own interest, to join their arms with the rest of Europe, which the encroachments of Lewis XIV. had at length roused to take just vengeance, and to concert proper measures for their own security.

BUT it cannot be expected, that the flatterers of a tyrannical Power in Church or State will ever be reconciled to the memory of William III. How glorious is it for him, that he was so much hated by them while alive, and that his memory has been so much persecuted since his death! Even the elegant Monsieur de Voltaire, possessed of as much freedom of thought as is to be observed in any writer born under an absolute monarchy, is far from doing justice to this great man.

† This is the language of Monsieur Voltaire: Mais reconnaître ainsi pour leur roi un prince pros crit par eux, leur parut un outrage à la nation, & un despotisme qu'on voulait exercer dans l'Europe. *Siecle de Louis XIV.* tome i. chap. 16.

70 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

ACCORDING to Monsieur Voltaire *, King William III. was more remarkable for depth of judgment, than beauty of genius or force of imagination. In his manners he was plain and modest, usually grave and reserved, and never lively but in a day of battle. He despised all kinds of superstition, and never persecuted any person on account of Religion. He had the valour of a soldier, and resources of a commander; and, tho he lost many battles, left behind him the reputation of a General much to be dreaded. He had an absolute influence in Holland, but did not destroy its liberty: Nor had he any *inclination* to render himself absolute in England. Without being popular he was a great politician; and was, indeed, the soul and prime mover of the half of Europe. Hitherto this Historian seems disposed to do justice. In what follows his good disposition towards this great prince is not so conspicuous. He died (says he) without giving any answers to what the English Clergy said to him about their religion, and discovered no anxiety about any thing but the affairs of Europe. If Mr. Voltaire intended this as a tacit accusation of impiety, it is scarce pardonable in an author who affects so much to despise *super-*

* Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. 16.

stition. He has likewise palpably mistaken the character of King William, and put an unjust gloss upon the reserve that appeared in the last scene of his life. This hero affected not shew or popularity during his life : he had too great a soul to alter his manner, and to affect them at his death. Having often faced death in the field with courage, he felt its actual approaches without any concern for himself, and had no other concern but for the welfare of Europe.

To judge of him from his actions, and to put the most natural construction on his conduct, the welfare of Europe, and the preservation of liberty, were always in his view ; the accomplishment of these great ends the main business of his life.

ACCORDING to M. Voltaire, the Prince of Orange had conceived vast designs, nay, was more ambitious than Lewis XIV. This may be allowed. There are few great men without great ambition. But the ambition of Lewis and that of William were entirely different. Lewis was ambitious of rendering his power absolute at home, and of destroying any remainder of liberty that was to be found in France : William was ambitious of preserving the rights and liberty
of

of his country. Lewis was ambitious of subduing and enslaving all the neighbouring nations : William of protecting them against the attacks of Lewis. Lewis attacked Holland from pride and a desire of glory : It was the glory of William to defend that sinking State. Lewis was ambitious of destroying the protestant religion in France : William, of protecting and preserving it in Britain. Lewis was ambitious of making conscience yield to his despotic sway : William, of preserving the rights of conscience sacred and inviolable. Lewis's ambition was accompanied with *injustice and cruelty*, both to his own subjects and to his neighbours : William's, with *justice and mercy*. To finish the comparison : Lewis was disappointed of his ambitious purpose to establish an universal monarchy : William succeeded in his great design of humbling tyrants. William in his life set bounds to the power of Lewis, and stopped the career of his conquests. By the execution of the schemes which William had projected while alive, even after his death he brought down the high spirits of Lewis, and spoiled him of his former trophies.

It is difficult even for men of liberal minds wholly to divest themselves of the prejudices of education. M. Voltaire is a
 strik-

striking proof of the truth of the observation. Tho he allows, that King James's going over to France at the Revolution was the æra of the true liberty of England *; that the wars which King William projected and Queen Anne prosecuted, were in reality the wishes of the nation †; that Lewis XIV. had taken up arms himself against his own nephew, against his son's brother-in-law, and against another prince nearly allied to his family; that the Duke of Savoy fought against the husband of one of his daughters, and against the father-in-law of the other: yet, passing over these examples of ambition in those two princes with a gentle censure, he attacks the Prince of Orange most unjustly, in a manner truly abusive, and altogether unworthy of the fine sense and penetration of such an ingenious historiographer.

“ THE most criminal undertaking in all
 “ that war, was the only one that was truly
 “ successful. William succeeded entirely
 “ in England and Ireland: in other re-
 “ spects success was balanced by losses.

* Ce fut là l'époque de la vraie liberté d'Angleterre. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.* tome i. chap. 14.

† Les mesures étaient les vœux de la nation. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.* tome i. chap. 16.

74 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

“ When I call this undertaking criminal,
 “ I do not examine, whether the British,
 “ after having shed the father’s blood, were
 “ in the wrong, or had just reasons, to
 “ banish the son, and to defend their reli-
 “ gion and their rights : I only say, that,
 “ if there is such a thing as justice upon
 “ earth, it did not belong to the daughter
 “ and son-in-law of King James to turn
 “ him out of his own house *.”

SELDOM has Mr. Voltaire suffered such an exceptionable paragraph to drop from his pen, or treated his subject so superficially: The daughter and son-in-law of King James were not either unjust or criminal in giving a seasonable assistance to Great Britain against the unlawful attempts of that prince. The rights of kings and of their heirs, and all the rules of succession, must

* L’entreprise la plus criminelle de toute cette guerre, fut la seule véritablement heureuse. Guillaume réussit toujours pleinement en Angleterre & en Irlande. Ailleurs les succès furent balancés. Quand j’appelle cette entreprise criminelle, je n’examine pas si la nation, après avoir répandu le sang du pere, avait tort au raison de proscrire le fils, & de défendre sa religion & ses droits : Je dis seulement, que s’il y a quelque justice sur la terre, il n’appartenait pas à la fille & au gendre du Roi Jacques de le chasser de sa maison. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV. tome i. chap. 15.*

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 75

ever be subjected to the general good and exigencies of nations. No race of kings can justly lay claim to an unalterable right of succession in all events, and upon all suppositions whatever. The rights of nations and the authority of laws are superior to the rights and authority of kings. Notwithstanding the *strongest ties* of gratitude and *natural relation* to any king, it will ever be just and glorious to deliver an oppressed nation, and rescue a sinking State from tyrannical power. Neither humanity, nor gratitude, nor natural affection, can bind up any of his family from defeating his unjust and destructive schemes subversive of the happiness of a whole people. If open force be necessary for this good purpose, the necessity renders it lawful. Gratitude and natural affection can oblige to nothing more, than treating the person and family of the Prince with due tenderness and respect. This was abundantly taken care of at the Revolution. The Prince of Orange at all times shewed as much regard for King James, as filial piety demanded; and, on certain delicate occasions, treated him with a generosity which marked the greatness as well as goodness of his mind. M. Voltaire has been blinded by his prepossessions. Tho he was able to overcome the prejudices he had contracted in favour of a superstitious religion, he has

76 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

not been able thoroughly to perceive the odiousness of tyranny, nor divest himself of an admiration of absolute power. So fatal is it to have been born under a despotic prince. Had M. Voltaire written with as much taste and impartiality on this, as on many other subjects, instead of condemning the Revolution, or accusing the Prince of Orange of injustice, he would have fallen down and worshipped, and taught the wondering world to revere that Liberty, which shone so brightly on Britain at that happy period, and was so little known among the neighbouring nations.

BUT it is less surprising, that a French man, who *professes* himself an admirer of what the author of a late Estimate * calls the gallant reign of Lewis XIV. should be less favourable to the memory of that hero, who defeated the designs of his favourite monarch. We may indeed wonder that the author of the Estimate, who hath enjoyed the blessings of British liberty, should not, even when he confesses that the people of Britain gained an accession of liberty, and British parliaments a new dignity and power, by the Revolution, place the happy instru-

* An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, p. 138.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 77

ment of those valuable acquisitions in a fairer light, and represent his conduct in brighter colours. The deliverer of Britain from popery and arbitrary power is not celebrated for wisdom in counsel, bravery in war, hatred of tyranny, or love of liberty ; but, in the *Estimate*, appears in the obscure light of an *election-jobber*, distributing places and pensions, in order to the *making of parliaments*.

WILLIAM III. says he, found an eager desire, in members of parliament, to obtain lucrative employments in exchange for their concurrence in granting supplies and forwarding the measures of government, to be the national turn ; and set himself, like a politician, to oppose it. He therefore silenced all he could by places or pensions : And hence the *origin* of making of parliaments*.

I WILL not say, that every author is obliged to write panegyrics, or to celebrate even the greatest heroes. But no author has a right to be *unjust* to any man whom he introduces in his writings : neither is it lawful to impute to him errors or crimes with which he is not chargeable.

* *Estimate*, page 109.

78 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

I do not inquire, how far the practice of *silencing* all, who laid claim to lucrative employments, by places or pensions, obtained in the reign of King William. I abhor bribery in all its shapes, and condemn the minister, who offers a bribe to any member of parliament to vote against his conscience. If he offers the bribe to engage him to vote according to his conscience, I will not make an apology for him *. Offering bribes, in any case, is criminal in its own nature ; nor can the end sanctify the means. I do not vindicate that measure, which was approved even by the austere Cato, who thought it lawful to foil Cæsar at his own weapons, and, in order to defeat his wicked designs, to offer a greater bribe, than was offered by the tyrant †. But, whatever danger may be conceived from the practice of making parliaments, or from attempts of this kind, if it was intended by the author of the Estimate to fix the æra of the commencement of this practice at the Revolution, or to ascribe the origin of it to King William III. he is altogether mistaken. It is true, the four princes of the House of Stewart were not fond of Parliaments. They often endeavoured to

* Estimate, pag 114, 115.

† Sueton. in Jul. Cæs.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 79

govern without them. But when they found it necessary to have recourse to them, they spared neither cost nor intrigue, both to influence the elections of members, and to gain them to their measures after they were elected ; and thus used great efforts to make parliaments. Did not Charles I try to break the party that had been formed against his measures, by conferring honours and lucrative offices on the chief men in the opposition? In Charles II's reign, the names and prices of the pensioners of the Court were publicly known. Did not James II. closet members of parliament, and use all sorts of arts to gain a parliament to favour his designs ?

It can scarce be imagined, the author of the Estimate could be ignorant of all this. I will not suppose, that he intended to ascribe the origin of the pernicious policy of attempting to make parliaments, to the great King William.

It is justice to put the most favourable sense upon the words of a writer. If those, used by the author of the Estimate, are capable of this sense, I will suppose he intended them in honour to King William, and meant no more, than that whatever *endeavours* had been formerly used to make

80 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

parliaments, yet parliaments had never *actually* been made till the reign of King William.* Thus much at least must be granted, if we will use the ungracious and unconstitutional phrase of making parliaments, That, during the four reigns preceding the Revolution, parliaments could seldom be made, and were therefore so of-

* The Author of the Estimate, in his second Volume page 193, gives an explanation of the Passage in the following words, " That the practice of making Parliaments was now, (that is in the reign of William the third) first laid down as a necessary Principle of Government ;" and this, according to him, " was the necessary consequence of lessening the Prerogative, where Parliaments were selfish." But this explanation would, perhaps, itself require an additional remark. For this practice was not laid down, either at that or any other time, by any open and avowed declaration of any man or body of men. And in so far as it was *resolved upon* by any minister, it was not, in this sense, *first* laid down after the Revolution. It had been laid down by many ministers in former periods. 'Tis true, that they laid down *other* rules, which have been *discontinued* since the Revolution. When they could not gain their end by the distribution of places and of pensions, they made use of arbitrary and violent means, which caused great distractions in the nation. Yet it may charitably be allowed, that few of our former ministers had recourse to these arbitrary methods, till they had tried the *other* to the utmost of their power, and had found themselves unsuccessful thro the jealousies of the people. If it is meant, that it must have been laid down by tacit consent, and that since the Revolution it was

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 81

ten hastily dissolved. During these reigns, both the parliaments and the people entertained jealousies of their kings. Those jealousies, for which their conduct had given too much ground, put it out of *their* power to *make parliaments*. It has only been since the Revolution, after the nation had secured their rights in the most solid and ample manner, and there was no longer any apprehension of popery and arbitrary power, that there has been so good a correspondence between our princes and their parliaments.

It is true, this good correspondence has often been ascribed to other causes, that are not so honourable. Much has been said of bribery and corruption. He would deservedly be laughed at, who would not allow that a great deal of it is true. He is no good citizen who does not lament it sincerely. However, one may be a good citizen, and yet think better of his country-

more necessary, and therefore more practised, than formerly ; neither can this be proved, till it is first proved, that under such a Government, as we have had since the Revolution, the nation either has been, or ought to have been, as jealous of their princes ; or that the measures of the Government have been, or ought to have been, as unacceptable to the body of the people ; or that this government has been as unwilling, as the former, to abandon measures, which appeared generally disagreeable.

82 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

men, than the author of the Estimate. It may be unpopular, perhaps, it may be reckoned bold, to assert it ; but it is hoped, it will be found to be true, That it is not in the power of any ministry, in the present times, by the highest offers, to bribe either the representatives or their constituents to part *with the rights*, and give up the *constitution*, of their country. “ A gift blind-
 “ eth the wise, and perverteth the words of
 “ the righteous *.” Places and pensions will have too much influence : yet we have great reason to hope, that, if a trial were to be made, a majority would be found to assert the dignity of our parliaments, and the liberty of our people.

No doubt, we may often be too lavish of our money, and not sufficiently attentive to the public interests. Instead of giving check to rash and forward ministers, who would foolishly engage us in unnecessary quarrels ; instead of chastising indolent and pusillanimous ministers, who neglect the honour of their king and the safety of their country ; we may sometimes be lulled asleep, and misled by ministerial arts. But, notwithstanding the effeminacy and venality of our times, it is greatly to be hoped, that, *upon equal*

* Exodus xxiii. 8.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 83

provocation, both our parliaments and people would be as untractable as before the Revolution ; that having been accustomed during seventy years to so glorious a liberty, we would endure the greatest hardships, rather than part with it ; and that the posterity of those heroes, who brought about the Revolution, will not look either upon it, or upon the happy instrument who so greatly conducted it, as the source and origin of their present corruption ; but will consider the settlement made at the Revolution as the great charter of their freedom, and the heroic prince who conducted it as raised up by Providence for the good of mankind, and the defence of injured nations.

It is much in this light the ingenious Mr. Hume has considered the Prince of Orange, and the establishment at the Revolution. For, tho no body will accuse him of being prejudiced against the princes of the house of Stewart, he allows, That the fluctuation and contest of the English government were, during the four reigns preceding the Revolution, much too violent both for the repose and safety of the people : That foreign affairs at that time were either entirely neglected, or managed to pernicious purposes : That, in the domestic administration, there was felt a continual fever, either secret or

E 6 manifest,

84 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

manifest, sometimes the most furious convulsions and disorders : That the Revolution forms a new epoch in the constitution, and was attended with consequences much more advantageous to the people, than the barely freeing them from bad administration. And tho he scruples to determine, whether we in this island have ever since the Revolution enjoyed the *best system of government*, he affirms in the strongest manner, that we have enjoyed the most entire *system of liberty*, that ever was known amongst mankind*.

As to the Prince of Orange, who conducted this great undertaking, tho our historian will not prefer his virtue to that of Aristides, Leonidas, Epaminondas, Pelopidas, Timoleon, the Catos, the Brutuses, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and all the other heroes, whose virtues have been recorded in the annals of history, he has, however, erected a very noble monument to his glory. “ The prince of Orange, he says, throughout his whole life, was peculiarly happy in the situation in which he was placed. He saved his own country from ruin. He restored the liberty of these kingdoms (Britain and Ireland.) He supported the general independency of Europe. And

* History of Great Britain, vol. II. pag. 443.

“ thus

“ thus—it will be difficult to find any person, whose actions and conduct have contributed more eminently to the general interests of society and mankind *.”

THUS our latest Historian, more than fifty years after the death of this prince, has contributed to render his memory and the memory of the Revolution immortal. In truth, the Revolution, and the settlement of the government that was made at that time, was one of the best conducted enterprises, one of the most important events, one of the most beneficent transactions, and, finally, one of the most solemn, deliberate, just, and prudent establishments of government, that perhaps ever happened in the world. And, among all the great men, who have been famous in later ages, it will be difficult to name one, who had *greater virtues* and *fewer weaknesses* than King William III.

BUT there is no unmixed happiness on earth. Every thing is attended with disadvantages. Britons have been put to considerable expence to support the Revolution. No sooner had the happy change been made, than we were obliged to defend what we

* History of Great Britain, vol. II. pag. 420, 421.

had

86 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

had so bravely atchieved against the power of Lewis XIV. who would have restored King James. After the death of King William, Lewis, contrary to the faith of treaties, acknowledged the Pretender to be King of Britain. Such an outrageous affront, offered to the King and kingdom, according to the accounts given to Mr. Voltaire *, effectually roused the British nation to arms, and kindled another war. Both these wars were expensive, and involved the nation in debt : but they were no less necessary for our security against the power of France, than for the support of the Revolution. The negligence and bad policy of Charles II. had suffered the power of France to become dangerous to all Europe. It was necessary for Great Britain to enter into measures with the States on the continent, to curb this exorbitant power. This put us to expence. Nor must we grudge necessary expence of this kind, till the formidable power of France shall be broken, and that kingdom be brought down to the level of the neighbouring nations. This might have been happily accomplished in the reign of Queen Anne, had the negotiations for peace been as wisely and as nobly conducted, as the operations of the

* Le Siecle de Louis XIV. tome I. chap. 16.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 87

war had been magnanimous and successful. But, unfortunately, that opportunity was lost. May the present be more wisely improved, and to the honour of his present Majesty! If the French do not yield to every thing necessary for our safety, may he humble the pride of France in a war by sea, that shall be more glorious and successful, than any land-war under the greatest of his predecessors!

IF we reflect on the ambitious spirit of the French Government for more than an hundred years past, we need not wonder, that we have been obliged to maintain expensive wars against so enterprising a nation. Had the Government avoided such wars altogether to save a present expence, had they remained stupidly unconcerned about the interest of their country and that of Europe, or had they, like King Charles II. favoured the ambition, and promoted the dangerous designs, of France; they had acted both ingloriously and unwisely. But their efforts, notwithstanding the narrow conceptions of such as would debar us from intermeddling in the affairs of the continent, must tend greatly to their honour. However, it is far from my intention to enter into any question about particular engagements, or to assert, that several unnecessary expences have not
4 been

88 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

been incurred during our late wars against France.

BESIDES the wars in which the nation has been engaged against a foreign power, we have been laid under the disagreeable necessity of defending our constitution against the disaffected at home, who have never been able to overcome the prejudices of education, and to divest themselves even of the most ridiculous and absurd principles which had been taught them by their parents, or had been the distinguishing tenets of those parties in which they had been early engaged. It is to these early prejudices, it is to mistaken notions of loyalty, and of the reverence due to government, and not to any wicked intention, one would wish to impute the opposition that has been made to the Government since the Revolution. “As mere nonsense
“as passive obedience seemed (says the noble
“author of the Characteristics) we found it
“to be the common sense of a great party
“among ourselves, a greater party in Europe, and, perhaps, the greatest part of
“all the world beside *.” We need not wonder, therefore, that such passive principles, notwithstanding all their absurdities,

* Essay upon the Freedom of Wit and Humour.

should

should have taken so deep root, if we reflect on the pains that were taken to propagate them, during the reigns of four successive princes, who used their most strenuous endeavours to establish this passive system, and both ridiculed and persecuted the patrons of free government.

BUT, tho we can make allowances for the weaknesses of mankind, we cannot help condemning their erroneous and dangerous systems of government. We cannot but be sorry, that they are so much deluded, and that there are, among Britons, some, who, like the Cappadocians of old *, have refused

* Justin. lib. xxxviii. cap. 2. His words are, " Sed Cappadoces, munus libertatis abnuentes, negant vè vere gentem sine rege posse."

As the Ancients had not a clear idea of a limited monarchy of the best kind, nor had ever seen such a government as the British, under King, Lords, and Commons, they looked upon the government of kings as opposite to a state of liberty. Where kings are arbitrary, or, as Justin expresses it (speaking of the most early kings, lib. i. cap. 1.) "*Populus nullis regibus tenebatur: arbitria principum pro legibus erant,*" the opposition is most just; but where the king is limited, as in Great Britain, there is more liberty and security, than under any other kind of government whatsoever. It can hardly indeed be denied, that an aristocracy, or a democracy, where mankind are more upon a level, is better calculated to encourage genius and activity, than any monarchy whatsoever. But this
advan-

90 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

ed to be free, and account themselves unworthy of that liberty, which was so bravely purchased at the Revolution. Nay, but we *will* have a king *, say they, an absolute, uncontrollable, irresistible king, and will be

advantage is more than counterbalanced by the dangerous factions which naturally arise under such constitutions. It may safely be affirmed, that persons of all degrees enjoy more liberty and security under the British monarchy, than persons of the same rank enjoyed under the Athenian, Roman, or any other of the ancient aristocracies or republics. For this reason, the celebrated Montesquieu, many of whose principles concerning government are not only more just and noble than those of his countrymen, but worthy of a free man; and shew, how well he understood, and how greatly he admired the British constitution; had good ground (in his *De l'Esprit des Loix*, liv. xi. chap. 6.) to say, that Harrington had searched for liberty, after having overlooked it, and that he had built Chalcedon, having the coast of Byzantium before his eyes. The plan formed by Harrington is one of the best models of a *republic*, that was ever conceived. Could we suppose it once fully established in a *virtuous* age and nation, it might last long, and seems to have few principles of dissolution. But Harrington erred in imagining that such a republic could have been either erected or preserved in the age and nation for which it was projected. Such a perfect republic requires a higher degree of virtue, than is now to be found amongst any of the nations with which we are acquainted. The *limited monarchy* of Great Britain seems to be the most perfect government of which mankind are capable in the present condition of the world. Of Britain it may be said, no less than of Cappadocia, but much more to the honour of Britain, “*Vivere gentem sine rege non posse.*”

* First Book of Samuel, chap. viii. ver. 11—20.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 91

as much enslaved as the French or any of the neighbouring nations. In opposition to all such slavish resolutions, we will assert our liberty : and, as we must impute a considerable part of our debts to the necessity we have been laid under of defending it against the secret plots and open attacks of the disaffected, we must look upon *them* as accountable for no small part of the expence of the Government in support of the Revolution, notwithstanding their loud complaints against these very expences.

How fatally mistaken are those deluded asserters of the hereditary indefeasible rights of kings, and of their absolute, irresistible, uncontrollable power over their subjects. How ungenerous is it, as well as unjust and contrary to good policy, in any of the people of Britain to rebel against the settlement made at the Revolution, or the family now reigning : a family which, without having used any influence whatsoever to obtain the crown, has been called, in a case of necessity, by the choice of the nation, to take possession of it, in order to defend the civil and religious rights of the people of Great-Britain : a family, which succeeds to the Crown as the nearest heirs of our ancient princes, after the *just and necessary exclusion of the Popish* line : a family, which, during the space
of

92 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

of forty years, since its accession to the throne, has governed *entirely* according to law : a family, under which this island has been greatly enriched *, and which is now so firmly established upon the throne.

GENEROUS men will be far from insulting the misfortunes of any family whatever. They will not rejoice in their calamities, even when these calamities have been brought upon them by their own mismanagement. They will disdain to aggravate their weaknesses, or misrepresent any of their descendants. But, for the sake of truth, from the love of justice, from a regard to the dignity of our parliaments, and to the rights and liberties of the people of Great Britain, they must be suffered to put the question, What family would the disaffected in this island set up in opposition to the just and merciful princes of the family on the throne? Do not the family, to which they are so fatally devoted, assert their absolute, indefeasible title to our subjection, independent on any choice, or consent, or advantage of ours? Do not they assert, that they are accountable to none but God and their priests, for the injustice they may exercise towards their subjects? Do not they maintain, that they ought not

* This shall be proved afterwards.

OF NATIONAL DEBTS. 93

to be resisted upon any pretence whatsoever? What more ample dominion could one lay claim to over his cattle? By their education must they not have contracted an aversion to British liberty, conceived high notions of the absolute power of kings, and learned an abject submission to the maxims, and a deep reverence for the superstition, of the church of Rome? Instead of endeavouring to gain the favour of the British nation, and recommend themselves to our regard, have they not chosen, even since the rebellion in the year 1745, to be more closely connected than formerly with the Pope and conclave, by suffering one of their sons to become a Cardinal? an instance of bigotry, or contempt of British Protestants, scarce to be paralleled, and such an extraordinary piece of policy * as can hardly be interpreted otherwise, than as a sign of their despairing ever to make good their claim to the Crown of Britain; or, if they can be supposed not to despair, as bidding defiance to all British Protestants, and declaring how much they despise any opposition that can come from the British

* According to the principles of an hereditary, indefeasible right of a family to a throne, and agreeably to the forms of the Church of Rome, Cardinal Stewart may be chosen Pope, and, upon the death of his father and brother, and their heirs, may become heir to the Crown of Great Britain.

94 OF NATIONAL DEBTS.

nation. This is the family the disaffected would set upon the throne. But what ought not a brave and wise Protestant nation to expend in defending the Protestant religion, and the freedom of their government, against the efforts of such a family *? Liberty can never be bought too dear.

* This nation (says a celebrated French author, speaking of England) will love its liberty prodigiously, because this liberty will be real; and it may happen, that, to defend it, its people will sacrifice their money, their ease, their interests; that they will burden themselves with taxes the most grievous, and such as a despotic prince would never dare to impose upon his subjects. *De l'Esprit des Loix*, tome I. liv. 19. chap. 27.

PART

P A R T III.

Of National Riches; and of the
Riches of Great Britain.

S E C T. I.

Of NATIONAL RICHES *in general*:

A Nation may be opulent and flourishing at the same time that public debts are high. This will appear to be the condition of Britain at present. It is capable of a very clear proof, and is a subject worthy of our consideration.

IN our inquiries concerning wealth, it is usual to consider silver and gold as the most substantial riches, as well as the most necessary means of procuring them: but neither the one, nor the other, is true. *Industry* is the *chief mean* of acquiring riches:
It

96 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

It is far more necessary than silver or gold. The most substantial riches consist in the abundance of those things which are necessary for the support and comfort of life. Where these are in plenty, it is of little consequence what the money or the bullion is, or whether there is any money or not. Money serves only for an easier exchange of commodities, and to fix their various values in proportion to one another. In this respect it is *useful*. It may also be considered as *real* wealth; both because the precious metals have a *certain intrinsic* value, and because mankind have agreed to use them as a common standard. But, compared with the cattle, corn, and other commodities, money is certainly a trifle *.

SUPPOSE each man in the nation had 3 *l.* in cash, and there were ten millions of people, we would have thirty millions of coin; a greater sum, perhaps, than is absolutely necessary for our ommerce. Yet how small a proportion do thirty millions bear to the whole value of the lands, and

* Dr. Davenant, who wrote many pieces on Political Arithmetic in the end of the last century; the Bishop of Cloyne, in his *Querist*; and Mr. Hume, in his *Political Discourses*, agree in this opinion about money.

all the other wealth of Britain and Ireland!

SUPPOSING, again, that, at any one point of time, every man lost all the cash in his custody; how small a part of their real substance would be lost by the generality either of the poor, or of the rich!

ONE cannot determine certainly concerning the increase or decrease of riches merely by the plenty of the circulating coin. We must take into the account the paper, and every thing which passes currently in commerce. Millions of coin may be exported at particular times, either for war, foreign subsidies, or other kinds of foreign service, or to pay for foreign commodities, without the least danger of impoverishing the nation. In the last case, that of purchasing foreign commodities, we get goods to the value, which, in the course of trade, will bring back the money, and will often bring it back *with interest*. But it must ever be of small consequence, whether we have the money, or goods which will cause the money to return. In the other cases of war or foreign service, the money, 'tis true, does not return; but it will be only a small part of our money, and a much smaller part of our real substance, that will be exported in

F

this

this way. And, as it may be necessary for our safety, so a rich commercial nation may be well able to afford this expence, and continue rich and flourishing notwithstanding.

SILVER and gold, which only represent more substantial riches, are of a fluctuating nature. It is not easy, it seems even impossible, to trace their various motions, or determine when they are in greatest plenty upon the whole. The most substantial riches are more visible. We may conclude with certainty, that the wealth of any country is increased, when the number of the people has increased; when the fields and gardens are better cultivated, and produce better kinds, and a greater quantity of fruits; when the country breeds more numerous stores, and better kinds of cattle; when the houses are more magnificent, and more richly furnished; when the people are better cloathed, and their tables are more elegant; when their ware-houses are filled with a more valuable quantity of goods; when the prices of their lands, and most other commodities, are raised; when their manufactures are increased; when their commerce is more widely extended; and there is greater industry, than was known in former times. If all these symptoms, or such of them as are most material, concur, the nation must certainly

tainly be increasing in riches. In such circumstances the state of the coin is but of small moment. A nation, which, during any particular period, has lost a million of its silver and gold, but improved its lands, and acquired valuable commodities to the extent of ten millions, must be in a better condition at the end of that period, than it was at the beginning of it.

S E C T. II.

General Observations concerning the PRESENT OPULENCE of Great Britain.

TO apply the observations, made in the last section, to Great Britain in particular: One may appeal to the most incontestable accounts of past times, and to ocular demonstration at present, Whether there is not a remarkable increase of valuable improvements, in agriculture and manufactures, since the Revolution?

It must be confessed, that, during a few years after the Revolution, before the government was fully established, the wars, which we were obliged to undertake against France, lay heavy upon the nation. The high taxes, which we were obliged to levy for supporting those wars; the interruption that was given to trade; the losses the nation sustained both by sea and land; the high interest and high premiums, that were given for ready money, before the Government was reckoned fully secure; caused no small distress, perhaps for some time made the nation poorer. Undoubtedly they prevented

ed that increase of riches, which otherwise would have been the natural consequence of the security and liberty gained by the Revolution. Could we have been equally secure, we would have been richer without those wars and taxes. But it is also true, that, as the Government gained gradually a greater firmness, as the great victories we obtained over the French during the reign of Queen Anne gave great spirits to the nation, as the accession of the family of Hanover to the throne secured the Government and rendered the settlement at the Revolution complete; such a perfect establishment of freedom and security has made trade and riches flow in upon us in a greater proportion than formerly. This is evident from the augmentation of shipping, the lowness of interest, the increase of rents, and the high price of lands; which the best calculators have determined to be the surest signs of the increase of riches.

THERE cannot be a more unsuspected witness in this matter, than Doctor Davenant, who published several essays upon the trade of England in the end of the last century. This gentleman cannot be accused of partiality to the Revolution, since he endeavours to shew, that the riches and trade of England were at the greatest height in the

year 1688, and that both had declined by the expensive wars and high taxes from the Revolution to the peace of Ryfwick. Yet if we confider the fymptoms he hath marked of flourishing and declining nations, it will be evident, that, according to his principles, Britain has been greatly enriched fince the peace of Ryfwick *. “ A great number
 “ of merchant-fhips, fays he †, efpecially
 “ a great royal fleet that can be readily man-
 “ ned, numerous and coftly buildings, with
 “ rich furniture, great quantities of plate,
 “ rich apparel, great ftores of native ma-
 “ nufactures and foreign commodities, are
 “ the true fymptoms of great wealth.”
 “ But—where a nation is impoverished by
 “ bad government, by an ill-managed trade,
 “ or by any other circumftance, the inter-
 “ eft of money will be dear, and the pur-
 “ chafe of lands cheap; the price of la-
 “ bour and provifions will be low; rents
 “ will every where fall; lands will lie un-
 “ tilled; and farm-houfes will go to ruin.
 “ The yearly marriages and births will be
 “ leffened, and burials increafed. The
 “ ftock of live cattle muft apparently di-
 “ minifh. Laftly, the inhabitants will by
 “ degrees and in fome meafure withdraw

* In the year 1697.

† In his Difcourfe, “ That foreign Trade is bene-
 “ ficial to England.”

“ them-

“ themselves from such a declining country.” Is this the present condition of Britain? If this writer was now alive, would he not acknowledge, that the state of Britain is entirely the reverse of what he most prudently foresaw would be the infallible consequence of a bad government, and ill-managed trade? As the appearances are all of a contrary nature, he would see with joy, that Britain has been greatly enriched since he wrote his discourses.

MR. HUME, in his Political Discourse of Interest, considers interest of money as the true barometer of the State, and its lowness as a sign almost infallible of the flourishing of a people. It proves, says he, the increase of industry, and its prompt circulation through the whole State, little inferior to a demonstration.

ACCORDING to the ingenious Bishop of Cloyne, the comfortable condition of the Commons is one of the surest marks of national wealth. Whether, says he, can a people be called poor, where the common people are well fed, cloathed, and lodged? Again, Whether it be not a good rule whereby to judge of the trade of any city, and its usefulness, to observe whether there is a circulation through the extremities, and whether

ther the people round about are busy and warm * ?

THESE authorities are of much greater weight, than that of the author of the Three Essays, who is continually crying Poverty. Never, perhaps, was there a more extravagant assertion, than that which we find in the third page, “ That, if King William “ had conquered France, and given up every “ moveable thing in it to indemnify the people of England, rich as that country then “ was, it would not have been sufficient to “ have paid our expences. Nor would “ France, after such devastation, have fared “ so ill as England hath done.”

IN opposition to such extravagant assertions concerning the poverty of England, it is maintained, in a late Essay upon the National Debt and the National Capital †, That the whole stock of England, including the coin, the personal estate of each individual, and the whole value of the land, has increased an hundred millions sterling, during sixty years after the Revolution, more than it had done during sixty years be-

* The Querist, Queries 2d and 532d.

† This Essay was published in 1750, by Andrew Hooke, Esq.

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 105

fore it. In the year 1628 it was 333 millions: In the year 1688 it was 616 millions. In the year 1748 it amounted to 1000 millions.

It is not, perhaps, safe to warrant all the principles and calculations, either of this gentleman, or of any other calculator in political arithmetick. Such calculations can scarce ever be exactly true, tho they are useful to direct our inquiries in these matters. But Mr. Hooke has proceeded on very probable grounds, and sufficiently proved, not only that England is richer, but that it has increased in riches, in a higher proportion since the Revolution, than it had done before *; and that the loud cry of poverty, as the effect of wars and taxes, is wholly chimerical.

Would it satisfy those gentlemen, who profess so sincerely to lament the misfortunes of their country, it will be confessed that we have been far from profiting so much, as we might have done, by the Revolution. Considering how chearfully our princes go into every scheme, that is offered to them

* If we are not poorer by the Revolution, we are great gainers upon the whole, as our liberty, and the Protestant religion have been more amply secured.

106 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

by their parliaments, and what attention is given to the general sense of the nation ; considering the princely estates, and ample powers, and great influence of our nobility and gentry, with the freedom and security of our *Commons* ; it might have been expected, we should have been both richer and more powerful, than we are. We are neither so easy at home, nor so revered abroad, as our advantages ought to have rendered us. This is owing to the keenness of our factions, and to a too general want of virtue. But after making just concessions on the one side, it ought to be granted on the other, that, notwithstanding all mismanagements and weaknesses, we still remain a rich, a great, and a powerful people.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

Of the Riches of NORTH BRITAIN.

IN a smaller nation, where good agriculture and manufactures have been lately introduced, improvements will be more sensible, than in a kingdom of greater extent, more populous, and where good agriculture and an extensive commerce have been of longer standing. For this reason, tho England is much richer than Scotland, and the improvements of the English much greater, the improvements in Scotland may be more striking and sensible.

IN inquiring into the state of Scotland, we shall find so clear an evidence of increasing riches as can scarce be resisted. Nevertheless many in Scotland make loud complaints of poverty, and insist on several phænomena as infallible symptoms of decay. We are able to explain these phænomena, and to shew that they are perfectly consistent with an increasing opulence. Whence we have the strongest presumption, that appearances of the same kind cannot be inconsistent with an increase of riches in England : it will be proper, therefore, to make some observations on the state of Scotland, not only as it is a

108 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

part of Great Britain, but as they will be useful for illustrating the state of England.

THAT the fields and gardens in North Britain are better cultivated, and that the country produces greater stores of corn and cattle, can be contested by no man in his senses.

THE prices of lands are raised from fifteen or sixteen to at least twenty-three years purchase. The rents of estates and of houses, and the prices of most other things, are also greatly increased. This can as little be disputed.

As the Scots have more instruments and utensils of all kinds than formerly, so they have many more artisans and manufacturers. They work much more in wood, in iron, copper, and other metals. Nor can any one be ignorant, that their manufactures of cloth are prodigiously augmented. Thus both their commodities, and the prices of them, are sensibly increased; which, according to an indisputed maxim, is a sure sign of greater wealth.

THEIR shipping and commerce is most visibly increased. If in some few places we see fewer ships and less trade, this is much more

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 109

more than compensated by the great increase of trade in other places upon their coasts,

IF silver and gold were to be accounted the most solid treasure, what vast additions have they got since the Revolution? Some families perhaps have changed their antique plate for china ware: but what a trifle is this to the additional plate throughout the kingdom! How few families of any tolerable rank want a decent quantity of plate? How few had any at the Revolution?

A superior industry is the cause of this superior wealth. Before the Revolution there were few manufacturers or artisans. Agriculture and gardening were in a very low state. The farmers did little more than till and sow their fields late in the spring, and reap them late in autumn. They were idle both in summer and in winter. Since that time there is a great addition of artisans and manufacturers; and in many places the farmers are employed throughout the whole year. There are still many just complaints of idleness. The Scots have not equalled the English in industry. But a taste for improvements in manufactures and agriculture, and an inclination to industry, is gaining ground every day in Scotland.

INDUSTRY,

110 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

INDUSTRY, indeed, is the great source of wealth. It avails much more, than silver and gold, or the greatest natural riches. Tho a country be blessed with a soil capable of producing the finest crops and of feeding numerous stores of cattle ; tho there is plenty of natural wood and rich mines ; tho its seas, lakes, and rivers abound with fishes, and there are safe and convenient harbours : amidst all these natural advantages, it may have few inhabitants, and these few may be ill provided for. “ *Dii omnia vendunt laboribus.*” Without labour a nation may starve in the midst of plenty. Without labour every thing must languish.

THIS labour is laid out in cultivating the soil, in working in the mines, in fishing in the seas and rivers, in procuring materials for manufacture at home or abroad, in manufacturing those materials, in exporting the overplus, after our own necessities are supplied. These materials, either in their natural state, or manufactured, become riches to the country. If spent at home, they make greater numbers live more comfortably ; if carried abroad and exchanged for foreign commodities, bullion or coin, in the course of trade, they make an addition to the national stock. Not only the original prices of all materials, which the country produces, but

OF NATIONAL RICHES. III

but the price of that labour, which is bestowed on manufacturing and exporting them; not only the wages of all the working hands, but the wages of clerks, supercargoes, and all others who are in any manner necessary for the merchant, become an additional fund of wealth, and encrease the price to foreigners. The price of labour is often much greater, than that of the original materials. Industry has a thousand methods, by which it adds to the wealth of nations.

It is not possible to estimate precisely, how much the Scots have got by their superior industry. But it is easy to see, that they must have got a great deal. The labour of one employed in agriculture may be estimated exactly, by knowing the rent of the land, the necessary charges of maintaining the labourer, the price of the materials and toolsemployed in the labour, the price of keeping the tools in repair, and the price of the produce. The labour of a farmer's servant throughout the year must maintain the servant himself, yield him a little at the end of the year, help to pay the farmer's rent, maintain such of his family as do not labour, and likewise enable the farmer to lay up a little for his children. At this rate, it is very valuable. The labour of artisans and manufacturers must be computed at more, as a greater expence is necessary to prepare them for their employment.

112 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

ment. But, without pretending to the greatest exactness, let us suppose every one's labour at a medium to be worth only nine-pence a day, (which can scarce be thought too high, since many of our artisans and labourers gain a shilling to themselves, besides the profit they bring to those that employ them) and computing the number of land-labourers, artisans, and manufacturers of all kinds, above the number at the Revolution, to be 100,000 *, who work 300 days of the 365, a number which will not perhaps be thought too high, if we consider how much more labour is employed in agriculture and manufactures, than formerly : by this computation, the value of one year's industry will amount to the sum of 1,125,000 l. above what it was at the Revolution. Whether these calculations are perfectly exact or not, whoever considers things in this light, will see a vast source of wealth : computing the people of Scotland at a million, if they got so great a sum yearly, it would give twenty-two shillings and six pence sterling of additional wealth to every person in the kingdom.

* Tho it should be granted, that there were as many hands employed in agriculture before the Revolution, as are at present, it is certain there was much less labour, since many of those hands were idle during a great part of the year.

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 113

It will be worth while to consider the progress of industry, and to trace out the order, in which it produces its happy effects. This will throw a new light upon the subject of our inquiry. Notwithstanding the instability of human affairs, the same set of manners may be long preserved, and a country accustomed to idleness and rapine may continue long poor and uncultivated. If a spirit of industry is once raised, and continues to grow, its first effect is to add to the stock, and increase the riches of the country, which, without foreign conquests, can be done only by increase of labour. After this, it gradually increases the number of the people, by furnishing better means of subsistence, and by encouraging marriage. But in such a country as Scotland, whither few foreigners resort, it multiplies the people much more slowly, than the riches. The wealth of such a nation will be much sooner doubled, than its inhabitants. Nay, a very great increase of riches, by increasing luxury, may prove a hindrance to marriages, and may prevent a proportionable augmentation of people. Agreeably to such principles, it seems evident from ocular inspection, that the riches of Scotland are more increased than the people. Whence it follows necessarily, that Scotland is not only richer, but richer in proportion to its inhabitants. From which
another

114 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

another conclusion is easily drawn, that, since North Britain has a greater stock of provisions and commodities in proportion to the people, and these commodities do not perish, the Scots must export more, and have a greater foreign trade, than they had in former times.

Thus all the different means of proof concur in establishing his conclusion, That Scotland is much richer than it was at the Revolution, by the increase of agriculture, manufactures, and trade.

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

Objections to what has been asserted concerning the increase of RICHES in NORTH BRITAIN considered.

NOTwithstanding the arguments for proving that Scotland is much richer, than before the Revolution, such is the force of prejudice, that many in Scotland cannot be convinced of it. They will grant, indeed, what many among the English deny, that *England* has gained greatly by the union of the two kingdoms, but contend earnestly, that *Scotland* has been undone by it. The case is far otherwise. Both England and Scotland have gained greatly : England, by a more perfect peace and security ; so that, having nothing to fear in regard to those parts that lye nearest to Scotland, it can with safety cultivate them to great advantage : Scotland, by a share of the English trade, by a more speedy propagation of the English spirit for agriculture and manufactures, and by the happy progress, that has been made towards a complete rescue of the commons from that slavish dependance which was formerly so common, and still prevails too much, in North Britain.

IN

116 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

IN truth, the Scots have lost nothing, that can be called substantial. They have lost, indeed, what every nation, which is united to a greater, must lose, even when the union is absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the smaller one, and has been established upon terms greatly to its advantage. The Scots cannot expect to have the *intire* management of affairs upon the north side of Tweed. They have lost the *name* of independence. Two or three of their *old palaces* may possibly decay. It would be ludicrous to insist upon the want of the splendid procession of their nobility and gentry, and upon the brilliancy of a court, during the sessions of the Scotch parliament. Neither is the greater consumption, which was occasioned by those sessions, and which, by the bye, even in those days, was but a trifle to Scotland in general, of much greater importance. To compensate these *trifling* losses they have obtained *substantial* advantages. In place of a *Scotch*, their affairs are under the direction of a *British* parliament: an assembly which is much better constituted, has much more authority, and is more able to provide for the general interest of Britain, than the Scotch parliament could do for that of Scotland. In place of *empty titles* and an insignificant pomp, they have acquired the
more

more solid blessings of security, liberty, and riches.

A great clamour has sometimes been raised about the declining state of Edinburgh, the ancient metropolis of the kingdom. No doubt, this city, having formerly been the seat of government, may be supposed to have suffered more in proportion by the Union than most others; yet, if we consider the buildings that have been raised, and the improvements that have been made in the houses within the city, the houses, streets, gardens, and other improvements in the neighbourhood, the greater quantity of labour and manufactures of various kinds, and the greater stores of all sorts of goods for merchandize; we will easily see upon what insufficient grounds such a cry has been raised and supported.

BUT, if North Britain is become so much richer, whence is it, it will be said, that we see so many beggars and poor people? Whence is it, that more merchants become insolvent, and more landed gentlemen sell their estates, than before the Revolution? Whence is it, that merchants deal less in lending than formerly, and that many farmers are pinched to pay their rents, whose predecessors could lay out money at interest? Nay, whence

whence is it, that the number of the people is lessened, and that we see so many places in this part of the island, that were formerly peopled, now almost desolate, without houses or inhabitants? Are not these symptoms of a declining state? Neither is it difficult, according to such calculators, to account for this poverty, since so much money is yearly carried out of the country by the nobility and gentry, who spend their estates in England; and since luxury increases so fast, as must not only render Scotland so poor, but end in a speedy and universal ruin. These things are loudly complained of, not only by the disaffected, but also by many sincere, tho' timorous, friends of the Government.

It will be easy to account for every one of those phaenomena, which is real, notwithstanding the increase of riches; nay, to shew, that such appearances may be a natural consequence of that very increase. Speculations of this kind are not disagreeable, and illustrate the nature and effects of industry and commerce.

ONE thing is of the greatest importance in this argument; nay, the whole reasoning may be said to depend upon it, "Whether
" the number of the people is decreasing."

When-

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 119

Whenever a country is losing its inhabitants, this is a most dangerous symptom. It is true, in a nation consisting of more than a million, we may very well suppose, there may be ten thousand, that are entirely idle and useless. We may suppose them incapable either of adding to the riches of a country by their industry, or of defending it by their counsels or arms. These idle hands may be a burden on the useful and industrious. They may be good for nothing but consuming the produce of the country. Such persons may be spared, and the country be better without them. Being freed from the load and expence of maintaining them, the rest of the people will be richer and more able to carry on trade and manufactures. A State can never be richer or stronger by any but useful hands. However, as justice, humanity, and charity, oblige every nation to maintain many useless persons ; as it is impossible to make the distinction, and export only the useless ; it must be a bad symptom in general, when the number of the people is diminished.

IN a nation where there is a greater stock of corn, of cattle, and of all sorts of commodities, than formerly, if at the same time the prices of those goods, instead of being diminished, are increased, there must be more buyers.

buyers. If it were otherwise, the prices would fall. Again, if there are more buyers, either there must be more people in the nation for home consumption; or, if there is not, there must be a greater export and foreign trade; upon which supposition the nation must be richer. Which was to be proved.

BUT, in truth, as the nation must be richer, we may also conclude, that the number of the people will not be diminished. A greater foreign trade does not commonly cause the people to decrease. Excessive luxury, the consequence of great riches, may sometimes have this effect; but luxury has not arrived at this so fatal height in North Britain. It is only when luxury hinders the people from marrying, wastes their health, or renders marriage barren, that it becomes so baleful. In other respects, it tends to increase. If the luxury of great people requires such a number of unmarried servants as puts a stop to useful labour, it must lessen the number of inhabitants. But, as more work is daily going on in North Britain, and the number of labourers, artisans and manufacturers, is increasing, if the number of idle hands is also augmented by the luxury of the Great, the number of those in the inferior ranks cannot be diminished. Again, as the commons are far from being able to live in luxury, tho
their

their condition is evidently better, their better circumstances, instead of preventing, will rather encourage, marriages; and, as to those in higher life, tho' luxury will have a pernicious effect in other respects, yet, their number bearing but a small proportion to that of the whole people, the effects of the luxury of the Great, in diminishing the number of the whole people, will scarce be observable.

SUPPOSING it, therefore, to be certain, from the greater quantity of labour that is carried on, and from the more easy circumstances of the commons, that the number of the people in Scotland is not diminished, it will not be difficult to account for all those appearances, which the Discontented insist upon as infallible proofs of a declining condition.

FOR, I. tho' the people have not been diminished since the union of the two kingdoms, yet, in several places of Scotland, a custom has been introduced of uniting two or three smaller farms into one. Several cottagers in particular places have been removed, having been thought idle, and rather a loss, than an advantage, to the neighbourhood. In other places, some arable grounds have been turned into pasturing fields, which re-

G

quire

quire fewer hands to cultivate them. In some cases, greater wealth and commerce draw some from more barren to more cultivated and populous places, from the country to towns, and from the northern to the southern parts of Scotland. By these alterations, there are fewer people in some parishes, than formerly. Yet this deficiency is more than made up by the greater numbers of merchants, shop-keepers, artisans, and manufacturers in towns and greater villages. Thither do the cottagers and land-labourers resort, when they leave their former habitations. Several towns may be named, whose inhabitants are greatly increased even since the rebellion in 1745.

At the same time, I am far from applauding the spirit, from which many of these alterations may be supposed to proceed. It may be laudable at some times ; it may be no less profitable for the Public, than for the landed gentleman, to turn some small farms into one, and some arable into pasturing grounds. But this humour may easily go to an extreme : perhaps in some places it has gone too far already. If these changes are made, without any regard to the former possessors of these farms ; if it is not considered, by what other means these poor families, thus driven from their former habitations,

bitations, can be supported ; if such alterations are not made gradually ; tho they may be legal, or agreeable to rigid justice, they are, in their own nature, barbarous and unhuman, and betray a selfish and unmerciful disposition.

It may be doubted, whether these cruel landlords truly consult, either their own, or the public interest ; at least, whether many improvements of this nature are solid, and may be expected to be lasting. But be this as it will, and tho it should be found true, that increasing the extent of many particular farms yet farther, and throwing even a greater proportion of our arable into pasturing fields, would not only enrich the proprietor, but the Public ; yet as high prices of grain bear too hard upon the laborious part of the nation ; as turning multitudes of labouring families out of their possessions, when they have not the means of supporting themselves by labour in some other honest way, must certainly diminish the number of the people ; as in the multitude of the people is the king's honour, and in the want of them is the destruction of the prince *, all measures, which tend either to

* Proverbs xiv. 28.

124 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

cruelty or depopulation, ought carefully to be prevented*.

2. IN so far as poverty flows from sloth and idleness, it is natural to conceive, that, in a greater number of people, there should be proportionably a greater number of beggars.

3. As the expences of living increase, and luxury prevails, which has truly been the case since the Revolution, and will generally be the case when nations grow richer, the same quantity of money will not go so far as formerly. Consequently, if men gain nothing by industry, but live upon rents, which either are diminished, as has happened to those who live on the interest of money; or which are not increased, or do not increase, in proportion to the additional expences of living; all such people must become poorer, notwithstanding the general increase of riches. Now there is always a considerable number of persons, who are supported in this manner.

* See Sir Thomas More, the first book of his *Utopia*, and Lord Verulam, in his History of Henry VII. concerning the dangers which may arise from turning arable into pasturing grounds.

4. WHEN

4. WHEN trade is increasing, and a nation is enriched by it, this proves a strong temptation to many to launch out into too extensive schemes, and to venture farther than their stocks will bear. And, as unlucky adventures must often happen, this must necessarily give occasion to more frequent bankruptcies, than will happen in poorer countries where there is little trade. In poor countries there will be but few and small debts; for little credit will be given. In general, therefore, as more people deal in trade, there will be more frequent bankruptcies; and, as the trade is greater, they will be for greater sums. Yet this trade will enrich the country, and these bankruptcies will be of little detriment upon the whole.

5. THO the increase of industry may greatly augment, and has actually augmented, the value and rents of the lands in Scotland; yet the lower and middling ranks, the richer merchants, and other gentlemen who do not live upon rents, but by industry, will become sooner easy, and acquire the most early share of the increasing wealth. Such people are generally most frugal, and most attentive to gain. They have neither so keen a taste, nor so much time for expence and luxury, as landed gentlemen, or such as have nothing to do but to pursue their diversions,

versions. Gentlemen in this condition are commonly most expensive at all times. In times of greater riches, they are provoked to greater expence by the general taste of the nation, and by seeing merchants and others, whom they reckon their inferiors, approaching nearer them in their genteeler method of living. Meanwhile, tho their rents are raised, they are not raised so early as they begin to increase their expence, or in proportion to their taste for luxury. Hence, in an opulent commercial nation, a great many of the ancient nobility and gentry will at some times be observed to grow poorer, and will at last be obliged to part with their great estates to those industrious lawyers, physicians, merchants, and others, who have been more frugal. We need not, therefore, be surpris'd, that, when riches increase, there are many poor people in a nation. The maxim will hold in general, That, where there are many rich, there will also be many poor.

WHY, therefore, should the writer of the Three Essays * lament so heavily, that the halcyon days, which were seventy years ago, are miserably changed; and that his friend's estate of 900 *l.* a year cannot now go so far,

as it could have gone in the days of his grandfather? The writer would impute this difference to high taxes; but he ought to impute the greatest part of it to the increase of riches. If any gentleman is indolent in not improving his estate when he has good opportunities, what can be expected, but that he should grow poorer, as the nation increases in riches? This is the natural order of things. It would, surely, be too much for the nation, out of complaisance to an inactive squire, to put a stop to its industry and trade. The estate, which in the Three Essays is said to be much less considerable than it was seventy years ago, is supposed to lie in England. The gentlemen of that kingdom, no doubt, deserve great regard; but a greater regard still is due to the *whole* body of the people. The commons, consisting of merchants, farmers, and artificers, are indeed the glory of England. The riches of these inferior ranks of men, depending on their freedom and industry, according to Mr. Hume*, give the advantage to England above any nation at present in the world, or that appears in the records of any story. Scotland has not hitherto had the happiness to have such wealthy and independent commons. However, in its present condition,

* In his Political Discourse of Commerce.

128 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

it is evident, that the same sum of money cannot go so far as formerly, and that those, who have made no addition to their estates, must appear poorer than in ancient times.

6. WHEN there is much money to be lent by private hands, this is far from being a sure sign of the increase of riches. To form a certain conclusion, one ought to attend to many different circumstances. If there are many frugal people, who spend less than they have, tho they have but little, what little they can spare they will be willing to place out at interest, provided they cannot dispose of it to better advantage. This must have been the case before the Revolution, supposing the fact to be true. But after the union of the two kingdoms, when by commerce with England better methods of agriculture and manufacturing were discovered, and new sources of trade were opened, as the industrious part of the nation became richer, instead of placing out their money at interest, they often improved their grounds, purchased a better stock of cattle, enlarged their manufactures, or extended their trade. This turned to better account, but disabled them from lending. Where there is a great deal of money to be lent, and the lenders are such as live on their rents, without industry or business; this shews, that these

these persons live within their income. This is happy for their families, and often profitable for the Public; tho cases may be put, in which spending their whole rents, which would prevent lending, may turn out more to the benefit of the country. If, notwithstanding an increasing trade, and an opulent manner of living, the merchant can afford to make purchases, or place out money at interest, this is indeed a sign of immense wealth. At other times lending money may be a bad sign, and only shew that the merchant does not know how to turn his money to greater advantage in the way of trade. Thus it is easy to solve those appearances, which are so frightful to some unfortunate people, who can never discern the prosperity of their country.

It will be full as easy to make it appear, that, tho a considerable sum is yearly carried to England by the nobility and gentry, this does by no means exhaust the country; nor will the argument from this topic answer the purposes of those, who raise so loud a clamour on this head.

It is true, ever since the union of the two crowns in the person of James VI. of Scotland, many of the Scotch nobility and gen-

try have been in use to spend some part of their rents in England. It is also true, that more money has been carried to England since the union of the two kingdoms than formerly. It is confessed, this is a disadvantage in some respects : if 50,000 l. sterling be carried to England yearly, this is much the same, as if the Scots owed the English the capital of a million, computing the interest at five per cent. So much are the national riches diminished. The Scotch nobility and gentry cannot be vindicated, if, without any real necessity or just reason, they live too much in England, and will not reside at the fine seats of their ancestors even in summer or autumn. There is certainly a *greatness and generosity* in not abandoning our friends or our country when they are poor. Whatever can be justly construed into a contempt of either of them must be highly criminal. But, after all, great latitude must be allowed in cases of this nature. Men are not bound by any tie to live in any particular place, merely to keep money in that spot of the earth. One need not wonder, that there should be so great a resort to London : so large and opulent a city must furnish business and entertainment, to suit various dispositions, and to allure multitudes from every quarter. The same attracting force may be observed in the
large

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 131

large capitals of every other country *. No wonder therefore, that men of rank in Scotland should incline to spend some part of their time in such a metropolis.

WITHOUT inquiring, whether a very large capital is more advantageous, or disadvantageous to a nation; whether the capital of Great Britain is not like a head too large for the body; or, whether Scotchmen are or are not to be blamed for living so much at London; it is evident that North Britain is not impoverished by their resort to the capital; but, on the contrary, is daily increasing in riches; and that the Scots nobility and gentry carry away only a part of their *increased* rents. This, if it were necessary, might be illustrated by a particular computation: but without any calculation, it is ap-

* Aspice agendum hanc frequentiam, cui vix urbis immensæ tecta sufficiunt. Ex municipiis et coloniis suis, ex toto denique orbe terrarum confluerunt. Alios adducit ambitio, alios necessitas officii publici, alios imposita legatio, alios luxuria, opulentum et opportunum vitiis locum quærens: alios liberalium studiorum cupiditas, alios spectacula: quosdam traxit amicitia, quosdam industria, latam ostendendæ virtutis nacta materiam: quidam venalem formam attulerunt, quidam venalem eloquentiam. Nullum non hominum genus concurrat in urbem, et virtutibus et vitiis magna præmia ponentem.

Senec. in Consolat. ad Helviam, cap. vi.

parent, that the rents in North Britain having been raised, in some places to double, in others to a half, a third, or a fourth, more than before the union, and being scarce diminished any where, the addition made to the rents must be greater than any sum, which the nobility and gentry can be supposed to spend in England. From which it may justly be concluded, that, since the union, Scotland has gained in the rents of lands and houses, as well as in trade and manufactures, and that not a penny of the ancient rent is spent in England.

THE only remaining objection to the assertion, that Scotland is enriched since the union, is taken from the luxury, that has prevailed since that period, and is said still to be increasing. But of all objections this is certainly the weakest. In truth, it proves the contrary to that, which it is brought to establish. Nothing can be more inconsistent, than, with the author of the *Three Essays* *, to complain of the scarcity of gold and silver, of the decay of trade and manufactures, and of the slow progress of agriculture, and at the same time, of the increase of luxury and expence of living. This writer, indeed, confesses, that one would scarcely believe

such a conjunction could happen. What *may be believed*, I shall not pretend to say : some people believe very odly ; but, whatever this writer or any one else may believe, one may venture to affirm, that such a conjunction in any nation is absolutely impossible.

GREAT complaints are made of luxury ; and made most deservedly. But, in truth, the increase of luxury in any nation is an infallible testimony of the increase of wealth. An individual may be worth 5000 l. per annum, and spend only a single thousand. He may augment his estate without augmenting his expences. But this ought never to be supposed of a whole people. If a nation become generally richer, the bulk of the people will incline to increase their expences. Landed gentlemen in general are too much disposed at all times to go beyond their incomes, and encumber their estates. But, if their rents increase, their temptations to live higher will prove stronger. Even the industrious part of the people will add something to their former expences, when they are better able to afford it. If, on the contrary, they do not grow richer, this cannot be supposed of the generality. If luxury is on the growing hand, riches must be increased in proportion. There is only one exception to this political maxim. For, if
a na-

134 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

a nation is indebted to foreigners for the means of supporting its luxury ; if foreigners have a just demand upon it for sums equal to the additional expences above those of former times ; it is certainly poorer. What is due to foreigners must always be subtracted from the national riches. And, if any nation spend more than it really has, it must become poorer, and prove bankrupt at last. But how little can either South or North Britain be supposed to owe to foreign merchants ! I do not speak of the public debt ; this shall be inquired into afterwards : I only consider the debts of private persons. Now, the balance of what Scotch merchants owe to foreign nations above what foreigners owe to them at any particular time, must certainly be very small, compared with the whole riches of the nation. Nay, the balance may be supposed to be often on the side of Scotland. Other debts, which the Scots owe to one another, are of no consequence in the present argument, and do not affect the common riches of the nation.

WHAT absurd and ridiculous notions are we apt to conceive concerning luxury ! In one sense, almost every thing may be reckoned luxury. In another, there is much less than is commonly believed. Defining luxury to be a too elegant or refined, or a too
sump-

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 135

sumptuous, method of living, in a moral sense it is always bad; for it is a great corrupter both of mens genius and virtue. In a political sense, it is also bad, as, upon the whole, it renders a people weak in consequence of their vices. God forbid, that I should endeavour to lessen the horrors, which wise and good men have most justly conceived of it, or that I should not prefer the innocence and virtue of a nation to its riches. Not only ought a virtuous man to detest luxury, but, abstracting from morals, a sound politician, who considers only the strength of nations, ought to pass the very same judgment. For virtue, by rendering a people more honest and valiant, makes them stronger either for attack, or for defence; though it does not always render them opulent. It is only a high degree of virtue that can secure good morals and great riches at the same time; yet it always tends to preserve a nation longer, and render it more secure. On the other hand, luxury enervates a people. Yet, where it runs through all ranks, it can only be supported by superior riches.

THOSE maxims, that are just when applied to the luxury of particular persons, cannot always be applied when we consider a whole people. A private citizen may
spend

spend more than he has, and may at last prove bankrupt. It is altogether improbable, that this should happen to an industrious nation. The bulk of an industrious people never were, and, according to the common principles of human nature, never will be, disposed to exceed their revenues. Such people are commonly attentive to gain. The love of profit is stronger with them, than the love of pleasure. In consequence of this they live within bounds, and the far greatest part of them are frugal. It is chiefly among men of great fortunes, who gain nothing by labour, that we shall find the disposition to extravagant expence. In an industrious nation these form but a small body. Such of them as run in debt, do it gradually. And, as rich industrious men come in their places, it is of less consequence to the nation. But we need not put the issue of this matter upon probabilities only; in truth, it is as impossible for a whole nation, as for particular persons, to spend more than they have, without being indebted to others. In short, if luxury has been increasing in Scotland ever since the Revolution, riches must have increased in proportion.

SECT.

S E C T. V.

*Answers to objections against what has been
asserted concerning the wealth of ENGLAND.*

IF Scotland is evidently richer than it was before the Revolution, no good reason can be assigned, why England should not be supposed to have been equally fortunate. England is the land of liberty; London, the center, from which this liberty flows to the rest of the island. The rays of liberty, like those of light, are denser when nearer the center. The Scots are at a greater distance from it. The English are nearer it, and must have peculiar advantages. During several ages, they have been a richer and a more industrious nation. They have had greater skill in agriculture and manufactures, and better notions of trade. In general, they seem to have less curiosity than the Scots, or rather to be more steady in their pursuits. Their artisans and dealers of every kind confine themselves to fewer branches of trade or manufactures, and divert less to other objects not connected with their chief employment. This makes them more expert and successful in those particular branches of trade which they pursue. All these are so great
advan-

advantages, that it is scarce to be thought, the English have not made proportionably greater advances than the Scots; unless it is supposed, that their more early application to trade, and their having carried it to so great a height before the Revolution, hath rendered it impossible, or very difficult, for them to multiply their trade in the same proportion, as may easily be done by the French or Scots, who have more lately applied themselves to commerce.

BUT, be this as it will, the improvements of England since the Revolution are very great. Compared with England, Scotland is extremely poor; and in all taxes, imposed for the expence of government, ought to be considered in this light. All the signs which indicate an increase of riches are visible in England. Its agriculture is much advanced, the value of land is raised, the interest of money reduced, the quantity of shipping of all kinds, and of the Royal Navy in particular, prodigiously augmented. Numerous stately buildings have been raised, and all things appear grand and magnificent. From all which it might be expected, the minds of the English would be easy upon this point, and not be perpetually haunted with the dreadful spectres of poverty and ruin.

YET

OF NATIONAL RICHES. 139

YET not long ago, an essay was published, to prove that the foreign trade of Britain is fast declining. This Essay has been ascribed to a merchant lately deceased, who was no less eminent for his riches and extensive trade, than for large and generous notions of commerce, and for a firm patriotism *. A gentleman of such a character could have nothing at heart but the good of his country. He could not have any intention to mislead his countrymen. Yet, this worthy citizen actually misleads, and sets before us a very disagreeable view of our affairs.

Not only hath he asserted, that the foreign trade of England is declining, but he seems to infer, that the loss of it makes us decline in all other respects, and that upon the whole the nation is growing poor. If this be not his meaning, or if he would allow, that we are growing rich upon the whole, we might be less concerned about our foreign trade, or any particular branch

* Sir Matthew Decker: his book is intituled "An essay on the causes of the decline of the foreign trade, consequently of the value of the lands, of Britain, and on the means to restore both."

This piece seems to have been composed about the year 1740, and has been printed oftner than once.

140 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

of that industry by which we are enriched.

ON this subject of foreign trade two suppositions may be made. 1. That, tho upon the whole we are gainers by it, we are not so great gainers as at some former period. If this be true, it is a disadvantage; unless by applying less to foreign trade, we bestow our labour at home on an industry that is more profitable. It is certainly more profitable to improve our barren lands to the value of a million, than only to gain half a million by foreign commerce.

2. It may be next supposed, that, upon the whole, we are losers by our foreign trade; and our loss may be computed to amount to a million, or half a million annually, or to any other sum. Even upon this supposition, we may be growing richer upon the whole; for, if we only lose annually half a million by our foreign trade, while we are improving our barren lands and stock of cattle to the value of a million, we are certainly gaining half a million yearly.

It may be added, that our gains by domestic industry, and by the improvement of
our

our lands and stock of cattle, are of the most solid kind. They are more truly profitable than gains to the same nominal extent by foreign trade. The labours, by which we procure them, are more healthful; they keep our countrymen at home, keep our people more innocent, promote better morals, preserve simplicity of manners, prevent luxury, and are less uncertain and precarious. Foreign trade, no doubt, may be very profitable. In some cases, it may bring quicker gains. But our merchants, and many others of our countrymen, value foreign trade too highly, when they lay it down as a position, that a nation cannot become rich and powerful without a great and increasing foreign trade.

It is true, if we are every year losing by our foreign trade, we must gradually lose our silver and gold. Not an ounce of either of them will be left among us in the end; and we must use paper or other materials for circulation among ourselves. According to the author of the *Three Essays*, and other writers, this is all we have at present. Nay, according to the calculations of some of our merchants, who have been raising an alarm ever since the beginning of this century, long before this time there must not have been a shilling in the country; as

as the balance of trade is said to be almost every where against us. But the great quantity of coin and plate that is to be seen, is an infallible proof that there is an error in their computations, and that, upon the whole, the English are still gaining by their foreign trade*.

To give an exact and complete account of the foreign trade of Britain; to compare the quantity and value of our exports and imports; to distinguish precisely, when, and where, and how far, the balance of trade is either on our side, or against us; is too great an attempt for the most skilful of our merchants. It is not proposed to launch out into so wide an ocean. But, without any such detail, it will not be difficult to shew, that Sir Matthew Decker has not proved, that the foreign trade of Britain is declining; and that all the appearances, upon which he builds his opinion, may be solved upon other principles.

He takes notice † of the long credit taken by shop-keepers; the great number of

* If the quantity of silver and gold in plate, coin, and bullion, is continually increasing in any nation where there are no mines, that nation must be gaining by foreign trade.

† At the beginning of his Essay.

bankrupts; the great arrears of rent owing all over England, which the landlords every where complain of; the great number of farms thrown upon the landlords hands; the vast increase of the poor's rates. All these appearances, in so far as they are real, have been explained already. They are the natural consequence of great luxury, and great luxury is the effect of great riches.

BUT, beside those phenomena already explained, Sir Matthew Decker observes, that many petitions are presented to parliament, complaining of the decay of the woollen manufactures, and of the starving condition to which the poor are reduced in the cloathing countries: two facts, the truth of which I do not examine; for, supposing them to be true, they prove no more than that one branch of foreign trade is decayed; which may be supplied by others. Trade is very variable in its nature. All the branches of it cannot flourish equally at all times. Particular causes may make *some of them* languish at times at which commerce is in the most prosperous condition *upon the whole*. When several nations in Europe, roused by the example of the British, are setting up manufactures, and encouraging their people to trade, this must necessarily produce alterations. No wonder, that our rivals the French,

French, and other nations upon the continent, seize several branches of commerce; or that our own merchants, intent upon gain, give up a less profitable branch of trade, and prefer a more profitable. As a balance on our side, many branches of trade have been both established, and carried to a great length, since the Revolution; in particular, several, by which we save vast sums, which formerly we paid to the French, and which at present add considerably to the national wealth*.

THE lowness of the price of wool, which is considered as another symptom of the decline of the woollen manufacture and of our foreign trade, may be accounted for, in some measure, by the increase of the breed of sheep in Britain and Ireland, and by the difficulty of smuggling wool into France, notwithstanding the high prices it gives in that country. It is not proposed to examine the state of the wool, or how far the woollen manufacture is decayed. This is a subject more proper for others, than for the author of the *Characteristics*. But it may be observed in general, that the cheapness of the materials is an advantage to a manu-

* See Postlethwayt's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, under the article *TAXES*.

facture;

facture; and that materials may increase so much, that their prices may be low even when there is a great demand for the manufacture into which they are wrought.

THE other bad symptoms of a declining foreign trade, that are mentioned by this writer, arise from the state of the exchange, bullion, and coin. It is said, the exchange was more against us in the year 1740, than formerly. But does any man know, how the exchange stands between London, and *all* the places with which the English trade? or does he know, how much we lose or gain by every city, or by every branch of trade? Except he know this in the constant course of trade, he cannot know how the exchange stands upon the whole, or draw firm conclusions from the course of it.

THE scarcity of silver coin is given as another sign of the declension of our foreign trade. But if we have greater plenty of guineas and of foreign gold, this will compensate the scarcity of silver. There is an obvious reason for this scarcity: our silver and gold coins are not properly adjusted in proportion to the rest of the coins in Europe; so profit may be made by exporting the latest coined and the heaviest of our silver money. This is a loss, no doubt;

H

but

but it doth not prove, that our foreign trade declines.

THE last bad symptom, observed by the writer of the Essay, is that the mint lies idle, and that little or no new coin appears. On this, he lays down two maxims, both of them fallacious. “ The barometer of the
“ general trade of a nation is its mint. If
“ plenty of treasure is brought in, and
“ little carried out, part of it will be con-
“ tinually coining, and much new money
“ will appear; the certain symptom of a
“ flourishing trade*.” Is not the reverse rather to be expected? and may not the maxim be turned another way? “ If plenty
“ of money is brought in, and little carried
“ out, the coin will not be diminished, but
“ be increased. There will be no necessity
“ for a new coinage; so little new money
“ will appear: the certain symptom of a
“ flourishing trade.”

THIS argument will appear stronger, if we consider the circulation of paper.

HIS second maxim is of the same kind.
“ † If much treasure be brought in, yet
“ more be carried out, the mint must lie

* Essay, page 3.

† Ibid.

“ idle

“idle. Little new money will appear; the
 “sure sign of a decaying trade.” The re-
 verse appears rather to be the truth: “If
 “much money be brought in, yet more be
 “carried out, the mint must not lie idle,
 “as coin will be daily more scarce. There-
 “fore there will be a great deal of new
 “money appearing; the sure sign of a de-
 “caying trade.” However, as merchants
 are best able to judge of these maxims, it
 is best not to be positive on this subject of
 the mint: only, in general, it seems to be
 true, that a greater or less quantity of coin
 is not a *certain* sign, either of increasing po-
 verty, or of growing riches.

THUS, notwithstanding his knowledge of
 trade, this eminent merchant has not proved,
 that the foreign trade of England hath de-
 clined. Such a decline is not probable,
 since the number of merchants and of ships
 is daily increasing. It is scarce to be thought,
 that our merchants would persist in carrying
 on a losing trade. We see the very same
 appearances as if we were gaining: for, if
 our merchants are gaining, whatever they
 gain must, at last, be brought to our fields,
 cities, and harbours. Merchants can se-
 cure their gain no where else, except they
 lend it to foreigners, or place it in foreign
 banks. I do not find, this is alleged.

Wealth is thought to be no where so safe as in Britain. We see daily additions made to our shipping. Our harbours are in a better condition. There is plenty of naval stores. We have all sorts of foreign commodities. Our own fields are better cultivated. Therefore the presumption certainly is, that our foreign trade, as well as our domestic industry, is increased. But, after all, the question of the greatest importance is not, "Whether we gain or lose by foreign trade?" The more important inquiry is, "Whether we are growing richer or poorer upon the whole?" If it would put an end to disputes about foreign trade, more might be granted, than can possibly be demanded by such as are most anxious about it. Grant that during the last sixty years we have lost half a million yearly by foreign trade, or, which is the same thing, have exported bullion or coin to that value, amounting in the whole to thirty millions; the most timorous dealers in exchange can ask no more. So great a loss seems absolutely impossible, considering the immense quantity of additional plate that has been got within this period. Yet, even upon this hard supposition, as the nation has gained to a much greater value by the improvement of our lands and home-manufactures, we are a great deal richer upon the whole.

WE

WE ought not, however, to neglect the good advice of this worthy citizen. He has said enough to put us upon our guard, and hath suggested many useful methods for recovering some branches of trade, which we may have lost, and for improving such as may be in danger. The nation is, undoubtedly, greatly obliged to him for his good wishes and useful endeavours; but he has been misled by the greatness of the commerce of England. The English have been continually improving their trade from the days of Queen Elizabeth: so it is at length come to a great height. The advantages, which they have gained by it, have stirred up the emulation of other nations. Ever since the reign of Lewis XIV. the French have made great efforts to rival us in trade. Being an ingenious and ambitious nation, they have succeeded very far in their design. Viewing the great advances which the French have made, and which are more sensible during the last forty years, one is apt to imagine, that the English trade, though really much greater, begins to decline. As it was great before, the later increase of it becomes less perceptible. It is impossible, in the nature of the thing, that the trade of any nation can be *continually* increasing, and bring in greater and greater sums in a perpetual succession. It must often be at a

stand. It may often be so great, that it will not be easy to enlarge it. It may often appear to decline, when it is really, though insensibly, increased. But, while we see such goodly appearances and improvements in our fields, cities, and harbours, we have infallible testimonies of increasing riches.

It is not however intended to assert, that our country might not be much more improved, and the commerce of Great Britain rendered much more flourishing. It would be easy to propose many excellent schemes for promoting this design. Many notable ones have been offered to the Public with this view. Among others, Sir Matthew Decker, and Mr. Tucker of Bristol *, have made some grand and magnificent proposals for raising taxes more advantageously for the Public, and for improving and embellishing our country. Such proposals merit the highest applause; they discover an exalted patriotism, and an enlarged mind, and justly deserve the notice of men in power. Could *any* thing tend so much to their honour, as giving due attention to public-spirited schemes, selecting such of them as are just and practicable, and employing

* In his excellent Essay on the advantages and disadvantages which respectively attend France and Great Britain, with regard to trade, &c.

their interest and authority to have them established? How hard is it, that so many are wholly taken up with their own selfish and *little* views, in procuring a precarious power, when they might obtain a more honourable and solid interest, by *real services* to the Public! When it is so easy to shew the advantages of many noble proposals, it is unhappy, that it should be found so difficult to put any one of them in execution.

BUT while Sir Matthew Decker deserves the highest praises for endeavouring to correct our errors, he has fallen into a mistake concerning the effects of our taxes at present. For the same reasons, for which we have taken notice of other errors in his Essay, it will be necessary to correct his mistake on this head; as it has raised too great an alarm, and tends too much to disquiet the minds of the people.

ACCORDING to this gentleman's principles *, when the Government raises 4,650,000 l. by excises, customs, and salt duties, and raises ten per cent. or 465,000 l. for collecting them, both sums amounting to 5,115,000 l. the people pay in consequence no less than 10,869,375 l. and add-

* Page 35.

ing the poor's rate, and the rest of the taxes, which he calculates at 4,420,000 l. the sum of all the taxes amounting at this rate to 15,289,375 l. he concludes, that, computing the people of England at eight millions, and their expences at 8 l. per head, (64 millions in the whole) more than 31 per cent. of their whole expences is chargeable on the taxes.

THIS is a high calculation. The method of instituting it is somewhat intricate. It is supposed that those, who pay the five millions immediately to the Government, must, on this account, raise the prices of their goods to their customers. These customers, again, must lay the advanced prices of the goods, which they have bought, on the customers to whom they sell them. These, again, must lay the advanced prices upon their customers; and so on in succession, through all the orders and individuals in the State, till, at last, the goods arrive at the consumers.

WITHOUT insisting, that this argument, if it is solid, must affect trade in *all* countries, where taxes are levied by customs or excises, and so must affect *our rivals* as well as ourselves; it is, in its own nature, too subtle; it is built on too precarious principles,

ciples, to be convincing, and seems more suitable to a *metaphysician* than a merchant. This will be evident from a few observations.

ACCORDING to Sir Matthew Decker, since the price of shoes must be advanced by the tax on leather, the grazier, the butcher, the tanner, the leather-cutter, and the shoemaker, who buy each from the other in succession, must lay upon their customers, first, the advanced prices of the shoes they wear; secondly, the advanced prices of the wages of their journeymen, who must raise their wages to answer the advanced prices of shoes; thirdly, the money paid on account of all the former advanced prices, in consequence of the tax; and last of all, a reasonable profit on this money as traders. At this rate this writer musters up twelve advanced prices in succession, which the wearers of shoes must pay for the tax, beyond the bare duty. And as both soap and candles are taxed, he places twelve advanced prices more on shoes, on account of the tax on soap, and other twelve on account of that on candles. He observes further, that the same thing must hold in all taxes on the necessaries of life; and that the dearth of all necessaries must advance the price of all labour, and force the master-tradesmen to

raise on their customers the taxes and advances on their consumption.

By these methods he finds, that the subjects, who consume the goods, pay more than the double of the tax which is levied by the Government.

But all these calculations seem to be founded on conjecture alone. And their uncertainty will appear, if we consider, that any reasonable rule, which can be laid down for estimating these advanced prices, must carry the matter much farther than Sir Matthew Decker himself hath computed, or than any man can admit.

THE most equitable rules for making any probable computation seem to be (1.) That every person whatsoever, who sells his goods, or labour, in the way of trade, from the first who pays the tax immediately to the Government, to the last who furnishes the goods to the consumers, must exact from his customers not only all the money which he paid on account of the tax, but a reasonable profit on this money, in the way of trade, as well as upon that part of his stock which is laid out on the prime cost of goods. (2.) That as the common interest of money is reckoned too small a profit in trade, a greater

greater profit must be allowed on the money that is paid on account of the tax. At which rate, these profits may be computed at 10, at 15, or at 20 per cent. and in some cases will reach higher.

THIS case will be similar to that of compound interest; in which, if the interest is at 5 per cent. the principal is doubled in fewer than 15, tripled in fewer than 23, and quadruplicated in fewer than 29 years. If the interest is supposed to be 10 per cent. the principal is doubled in fewer than 8, tripled in fewer than 12, and quadruplicated in fewer than 15 years. If the interest is supposed to be 20 per cent. the principal is doubled in fewer than 4, tripled in fewer than 7, and quadruplicated in fewer than 8 years. Computations of the same nature may be made for other higher proportions.

Now as Sir Matthew computes no fewer than twelve advanced prices on some taxes, and, according to his method of calculating, might undoubtedly, in several cases, reckon more; and as the profits of merchants on money laid out in trade may be supposed always more than 5, and sometimes more than 10, 15, or even 20 per cent. it is easy to see, that taxes ought to be raised to the con-

156 OF NATIONAL RICHES.

sumers, not only to double, but to triple, quadruple, nay, in a higher proportion; which yet no man can possibly imagine to be true. There must be a fallacy therefore in this argument. Little stress can be laid on such computations. So the people of Britain need not be greatly alarmed at the taxes imposed by customs and excises. And if there is no fallacy, they are in no worse condition than other nations.

I do not however enter minutely into the nature of such taxes; and shall not assert, that the Government might not raise equal sums, with greater ease to the people. I approve of many of the schemes suggested by Sir Matthew Decker and others, and wish that a spirit of patriotism may prevail more and more, to render them effectual.

PART

farmers, not only to double, but to triple

which yet no man can possibly imagine to be
 true. There must be a fallacy, therefore in
 this argument, unless it can be laid on

PART IV.

such computations. To the people of Bri-

tain need not be greatly alarmed at the taxes

Of the Payment of the National
 Debts.

I do not however enter minutely into the

IF Britain be considered at present with
 respect to piety, morals, or publick spi-
 rit ; if we examine the national genius,
 either for the nobler arts and sciences, or for
 war ; no doubt, there are many things a-
 larming in our condition. But nothing, that
 relates *only to money, or to trade*, ought to
 give anxiety to true patriots, excepting per-
 haps the greatness of the public debts. For
 tho we have sufficient funds for supporting
 the public credit, and for clearing the na-
 tional debts, yet great debts are *embarrassing*
 in their own nature, and unless they are pru-
 dently managed, may, in certain circum-
 stances, involve us in difficulties and con-
 fusion. For this reason every lover of his
 country

country should ardently wish to have the public debts paid, and should chearfully contribute his endeavours towards so good an end.

At the same time, there is no just reason to apprehend, that the nation either is impoverished by these debts in the mean time, or is unable to clear them without distress, whenever they set heartily about it. There is a fund of wealth in Great Britain, I do not say inexhaustible, but superior to that of any other European nation, not excepting even the Dutch, who, notwithstanding their immense trade and vast quantity of silver and gold, are far from having such solid funds, or being in such advantageous circumstances, as the British. Great Britain has substantial funds vastly superior to all our debts and necessities, even tho we are engaged in war.

SUPPOSING that we owe eighty millions ; eighty millions do not exceed, or only exceed a very little, perhaps they do not even amount to, the yearly revenues of the people of Great Britain and Ireland. According to Davenant's calculation for the year 1688, there were more than five millions and a half of people in England, each of whom, at a medium, spent 7 l. 9 s. 3 d. a year.

a year. Whether we consider the number of the people, or their yearly expence, the computation was not too high. It is computed, there are ten millions of people in Great Britain and Ireland at present. And, as there are such high complaints of our luxury, we may allow 8 l. 10 s. for every man's expence, or eighty five millions for the expences of the whole people. Again, supposing that a fourth part, or twenty of the eighty millions, are due to foreigners, and that we export a million annually to pay the interest at five per cent. at this rate, the yearly revenues of the people of Great Britain and Ireland, after paying what they owe to foreigners, do not amount to less than eighty four millions sterling*. With such a vast fund of wealth, can we be at a loss to fall upon proper methods of discharging the whole, or what part of the public debts we find necessary? Were we to consider the whole nation, as a private gentleman of a

* The author of the Three Essays has not a just conception of the wealth of England when he imagines (page 11.) that the English could not hold it long without being undone, if they were obliged to send 600000 l. yearly out of the country. They ought not, for no nation ought, to give away their money without good reasons; but tho they sent away a greater sum, they would not be soon exhausted.

good

good estate, who owed no more than a year's rent, it would give us a favourable prospect of our affairs. There is certainly some sort of resemblance. Tho the island, or the rents, trade, and industry of the inhabitants, cannot be sold like an estate; yet the public revenues, or the revenues of the whole people are like a perpetual annuity; and if a nation in such circumstances would raise their taxes, and spend no more than formerly, like a private gentleman, who raises his rents without increasing his expences, they must be able to pay their debts, without being in the least incumbered.

BUT leaving it to his majesty and the parliament to consider, how such salutary schemes may be best effectuated, methinks it would not be difficult for private persons, with no very great degree of public spirit, to assist greatly in accomplishing this excellent design, nay, to accomplish it without any loss to themselves, and without any augmentation, nay, with an abatement of the taxes. There is no mystery in all this. If the story be true, the honest man, who lately sent 100l. to one of the ministers of state to help to pay the public debt, has led the way and set us a fair example. Nay he has done more than is necessary. For there is no necessity for private persons to advance their money.

money. It would be sufficient, if the richer sort would voluntarily entrust the Government with their plate, and submit to the small inconvenience of wanting the use of it for a season. In imitation of the generosity of such a worthy citizen, who contributed an hundred pounds for so good an end, may a public spirit spread itself among the people, and every one run with his plate to the public treasury, that the public debts may be more speedily paid! What an immense quantity of plate is there in this island! How many millions of the national debt might be swept off by it at once! This would be an advantage to the Government, if no interest were demanded for the use of the plate. The benefactors of the Public would suffer no loss, since their plate is a dead stock to them at present, and they would have parliamentary security for its being repayed with the full value of the tax upon the plate and of the original workmanship. Mean time, let those taxes, which are understood to be the most burdensome, or to bear hardest on our trade, be abolished, and only such as are easily borne be continued for some years longer. In this method, in the first place, what is at present the national debt, and bears interest, or what part of it should be thought proper; and next the new debt, might be cleared. Can parting with our
plate

plate in this manner be said to require a very *high* strain of public spirit? How easily may plate be wanted! How honourable to want it on such an occasion! Might not a few grand examples render the want of it fashionable? Might not the whole nation be engaged in such a scheme with eagerness, and every man, who had plate, rejoice in having an opportunity of contributing to the good of his country?

WE have not the least reason to apprehend, that there is any *necessity* for such a scheme, nor to dread any danger to the public credit. The British legislature is sufficiently able, and, we trust, will not fail, to take care of the public welfare. But it becomes subjects under such a happy constitution to attempt what is great and generous, and to shew a forwardness to secure their free government against the most remote dangers. The slaves of an absolute monarchy need give themselves no trouble about their government, they cannot be *worse* than they are; but the subjects of Britain are blessed with a constitution, worthy to be preserved till the end of time.

ANY scheme of offering our plate to the Public may, indeed, be thought romantic. It is so, perhaps; and can hardly be expected

ed to succeed in an age nowise remarkable for public spirit. But it is generous at least. If we are disposed to go beyond the common rate, it is better to imitate those heroes of romance, who were remarkable for justice and magnanimity, than, as if we were *heroes* of a *different* character, and *indifferent about honesty*, imitate the author of the Three Essays in suggesting inglorious schemes of stopping the credit of public banks, and in endeavouring to excite opulent nations to defraud their creditors by abolishing the public debts, instead of honestly paying them. Let the ministers of a despotic monarchy applaud such fraudulent counsels. Let tyrants break their faith, and abuse the people, whom under the pretence of loans they have forced to surrender their money : but let the citizens of so opulent a nation as Britain, let the happy subjects of such a free government, be ashamed of dishonourable proposals, and detest insinuations of violating public engagements. Such counsels are equally contrary to the commercial interests of Great Britain, and to the spirit and genius of the British constitution. The British government would not suffer such proposals to be openly made without testifying their indignation at them, did they not consider their honour and faith as above all suspicion, and

and treat even the most peevish and discontented children with a more magnanimous indulgence, than an absolute monarch dares venture to allow to the greatest favourites among his slaves.

PART

Of the National Council and Cape
city for Self-Defence

WHILE the people of America are
possessed of great wealth and are
for the most part, happy and
this author has lately turned up, who

The author of the *Principles of the*
Principles of the

The book has gone through several
a new edition, and is now published
that the eye of the age is not to be deceived
author has altered, or that his book is unworthy
ed to this important task. A bold and manly book may
sometimes have a right to be published, and it is

PART

It is not easy to know how the public mind
has been affected by the late war, and it is not
reason to imagine that his design was for popular
few things are more popular, than to every against na-
tional vices. Those divines who paint men's sinfulness
blackest, raise the most dreadful pictures, and speak
the worst of the times and of human nature, frequent-
ly are the most popular. One may often observe whole
gatherings

164 OF THE PAYMENT, &c.
and near even the most peevish and discon-
tented of his subjects, than an absolute monarch dares
venture to allow to the greatest favourites
among his lieges.

P A R T V.

Of the National Genius and Capacity for Self-Defence.

WHILE the people of Britain are possessed of great wealth, and enjoy the most ample liberty, a British author has lately started up*, who,

* The author of *The Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*.

Tho this book has gone through several editions in a short time, it cannot be, from thence, inferred, either that the taste of the age is not so superficial, as the author has asserted, or that his book is unluckily adapted to this superficial taste. A solid and useful book may sometimes have a run in a superficial age; and *vice versa*. However, it is easy to account for the popularity of such pieces as the *Estimate*. The writer of it had no reason to imagine, that his design was not popular. Few things are more popular, than severity against national vices. Those divines, who paint their audience blackest, raise the most dreadful spectres, and speak the worst of the times and of human nature, frequently are the most popular. One may often observe whole
granting

granting all, that can be demanded on either of these heads, maintains at the same time, that Britain is going fast to destruction. According to this author, our liberty has degenerated into licentiousness, and our wealth has produced such an effeminacy of manners, as has almost extinguished the good principles, and destroyed the genius and capacity, of the nation. If it can be reckoned any happiness, he indeed allows, that there is scarce so much courage remaining, as will excite us to a civil war, or raise violent commotions at home. He is not therefore apprehensive of any internal danger *. But he pronounces us so defenceless against foreign nations, that we run the greatest risk of becoming an easy prey to any bold invader, and in particular of falling before the superior genius of the French.

THO both charity and justice forbid us to impute any bad design to this author, it is not easy to find out the good tendency of his performance. It may be kind, no doubt, to hold up a true mirror to the Public †, and to set the vices of the age in a proper light: but whatever benefit may be expected from a companies more highly entertained with frightful tales, and horrible relations, than with the most just descriptions of nature and of human life.

* Estimate, p. 125.

† Estimate, p. 15.

true mirror, or a just representation of errors and misfortunes, it is dangerous to present a glass of such an unlucky construction, as diminishes most of the beauties, and magnifies blemishes so much, that he who sees his face in it is in hazard of being frightened out of his senses, of swooning away at the ghastly appearance.

WHAT the author of the Estimate imagines to be a mirror, seems rather to be an instrument of this unfortunate kind. This gentleman has unluckily fallen into the same error, for which he blames the “speculative and virtuous in every age, who have been apt to aggravate its manners into the highest degree of guilt, to satirize rather than describe, and to throw their respective times into one dark shade of horror *.”

I sincerely lament the impiety of the age, I am sorry there should be such good reason to complain of our bad morals, and of our want of public spirit. I am far from approving many of our methods of education. I much dislike the reigning taste and diversions of many of our men of fashion and politeness. I most heartily condemn their passion for gaming, their luxury, effeminacy, and false delicacy. I would not affirm, that

* Estimate, p. 27.

the national genius and capacity for science, legislation, or war, is the highest of the kind, or that we have philosophers or poets equal to some in former times. We cannot pretend to have generals equal to the duke of Marlborough, or such seamen as admiral Blake. In short, our vices and weaknesses are too evident not to be confessed, and most sincerely lamented by every good man. Yet we are not so destitute of genius and capacity, as is maintained by the author of the Estimate. If he intends to say, as seems very probable *, that his country has lost its fame, and that his countrymen in general are become the contempt of Europe, he hath certainly carried the matter too far. The British are by no means contemptible; for with all their weaknesses they are envied and admired among the neighbouring nations.

If we consider in what age or nation, upon a due comparison of all circumstances, one would have chosen to live, it may be affirmed with less caution, than is used by the author of the Estimate, “ That there is
 “ no time nor country, delivered down to us
 “ in story, in which a wise man would wish
 “ so much to have lived, as in our own †,

* Estimate, page 83, 84.

† The author of the Estimate, page 15, puts it no higher, than that a wise man would wish this “ in
 for

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 169

for there is no time nor country, delivered down to us in story, in which the body of the people have lived in such plenty, liberty, and security.

If we consider our principles and manners, as indications either of our virtue or depravity, or of our genius or want of capacity, this author's assertions, after all his softening and limitations, are unreasonably severe. In no other light can we view several expressions, "That religion is evidently *destroyed* in England †; That the honest pride of virtue is *no more* ‡; That the principle of honour is either lost or totally corrupted; That no generous thirst of praise is left among us §; That the principle of public spirit or love of our country is perhaps less felt among us, than even those of religion and true honour ¶." The author has indeed expressly declared, that there are exceptions: but upon the whole he is too severe.

If we confine the inquiry into our principles and manners according to the plan of

"some respects." But he might have put it much stronger.

† Estimate, page 175. ‡ Ibid. page 59. § Ibid. page 61. ¶ Ibid. page 62.

this writer, and the leading question shall be, "How far the present ruling manners and principles of this nation may tend to its continuance or destruction *?" this author has much mistaken our circumstances, and pronounces too boldly on our weakness and want of defence.

"THAT fortune by no means rules the world; that there are general causes, natural or moral, which operate in every State, and which raise, support, or overturn it †," will be disputed by none. Nevertheless, every defeat, or unsuccessful expedition, is not to be ascribed to the manners and principles either of the whole people, or of those of higher rank; but may often be accounted for by particular causes.

THE greatest, wisest, most prosperous, virtuous, and magnanimous nations, in times of their greatest prosperity and virtue, have met with greater disappointments and defeats, than the British have met with in the present war. Four times were the Roman armies beaten by Hannibal in Italy itself in the beginning of the second Punic war. Our misfortunes have not been so great, nor of such long continuance, that

* Estimate, page 24.

† Ibid. page 12, 13.

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 171

we must impute them to a general stupidity or cowardice, either of those in lower or higher ranks. Other reasons undoubtedly may be assigned for them.

It is dangerous to decide hastily in such cases. Whether particular victories or defeats are owing to some particular cause, or ought to be understood as the effects of the general temper and genius of a nation, is often a perplexed question: it is often impossible to be determined, except by those who know the secret springs of action. It is often an useless question, and frequently issues in a dispute rather about words than things. Without detracting from the wisdom of the British councils, or from the bravery of the British troops, during the war in the reign of queen Anne, there are, at least, plausible reasons for ascribing no small part of our successes in that war to the incomparable military genius of the duke of Marlborough. At some particular times the safety and glory of a nation has been known to depend upon a single man, or upon a very few. In great nations this will rarely happen, if they are not subjected to a despotic monarch. When it happens, the situation is very dangerous. But such is not the case of Britain at present. We stand on a broader bottom, and our national

tional capacity for self-defence rests upon a surer foundation.

By the concessions of the author of the Estimate, “ the character of the manners of
 “ this age and nation is by no means that
 “ of abandoned wickedness and profligacy *.
 “ The common people of this nation seem
 “ possessed of bodily strength, hardiness, and
 “ courage. There are no better fighting
 “ men upon earth. They seldom turn their
 “ backs upon their enemy, unless when their
 “ officers shew the way, and even then are
 “ easily rallied, and return to the charge
 “ with the same courage †. The spirit of
 “ liberty happily still subsists among us,
 “ tho not in its genuine vigour. The love
 “ of liberty is not extinguished. We all
 “ wish to continue free ; nay, in his opinion,
 “ the spirit of liberty hath been ingrafted
 “ by the arts of policy in other countries,
 “ but shoots up here, as from its natural
 “ climate, stock, and soil : whence its de-
 “ struction by external violence will pro-
 “ bably be no more than temporary ‡. The

* Estimate, p. 26. † Ibid. page 88, 89.

‡ Estimate, p. 17—20.

This is the most comfortable prospect the author of the Estimate hath given us of the affairs of Britain. Despotism prevails almost universally. Mankind are enslaved by tyrants. An arbitrary power rages in the
 “ writer

GENIUS AND CAPACITY 173

writer likewise allows us "humanity, or
"pity to the distressed;" and perhaps flatters

world. Among the few nations, which have preserved their liberty, Britain shines foremost in riches and fame. But according to the author of the Estimate we are rolling to the brink of a precipice; Britain sinks under the superior genius of the French; the fatal hour approaches, and its liberty is in great danger of being destroyed by external violence. Slender are the hopes he gives us of escaping: the probability lies against us: our deliverance is only possible. "A despairing nation," (says he, page 221) *may yet* be saved, by the wisdom, the integrity, and unshaken courage of some "great minister." I dare say it is true: but if Britain is as much sunk in indolence, cowardice, and venality, as this writer apprehends, it is scarce possible. Even the great king William, who will be acknowledged to have been as able a statesman as any who can aspire to be a minister at present, notwithstanding the wisdom and rectitude of his schemes, is supposed to have been obliged, contrary (as will be confessed) to his natural disposition, to oppose the national turn, by silencing all he could with places or pensions. The power of a minister at present, (in times confessed to be more corrupted) can scarce be supposed greater but in so far as he has it in his power to silence a greater number by the same methods. This only cherishes the disease, brings us nearer to the crisis, and renders our destruction more certain. Our ruin therefore, according to this writer, may be called next to inevitable. But he gives us greater hopes of recovering our liberty, and, of consequence, our former glory and felicity, tho' liberty should be destroyed by external violence. "It is probable (says he) its destruction will be no more than temporary." In this island "liberty shoots up as from its natural climate, stock, and soil." To the present generation this may be thought to give little

us too much, when he adds, "That humanity is natural to the nation, and that the nation hath always been distinguished by it, and possesses it in a higher degree than other countries *." He likewise allows us another virtue, which he grants to be of the highest consequence, "the pure administration of justice, as it regards private property †." These are goodly materials, not only for preserving internal peace and happiness, but for defending us against external force. The strength and good principles of the common people in any country, especially in Britain, where they are more high spirited than any where else, ought not to be reckoned so despicable as the writer of the Estimate imagines †. We

comfort: to the cowardly, effeminate, and selfish it will give none: but how consolatory is it to the generous and disinterested lovers of Britain, who can be happy in foreseeing the grandeur and felicity of their country in succeeding ages! To some such extensive prospect, or to a sublime philosophical idea of this kind, "the present destruction, even of the greatest nation, is of small consequence in the universe," it must have been owing, that the writer of the Estimate, amidst his melancholy prospects of the present state of Britain, should appear so calm and composed, as to be able to study elegance of phrase, and search after those antitheses and elaborate turns of expression, which occur every where in this book.

* Estimate, page 21, 20. † Ibid. page 22.

† Estimate, page. 25.

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 175

may reasonably expect, that their force and weight would not be insignificant against a foreign invasion, tho deliverance should not arise from any other quarter; and that in times of extremity (according to the language of the Estimate) some leading mind or superior intelligence would naturally arise from among themselves to give impulse and direction to their enterprizes in defence of their country †. If the love of liberty about a century ago roused them to defend their rights against a powerful party at home, and inspired them with matchless valour, may it not be expected, that the posterity of those men, the robust and hardy commons of the same nation, not enervated by the luxury of the Great, but inured to labour, would, in a time of extremity, be stirred up to defend their country, and all that was dear to them, against any army that could possibly invade them from France.

BESIDES the natural strength and courage of our commons, and the acknowledged remainder of a spirit of liberty, humanity, and regard to property, diffused through all ranks; if we compare ourselves with our neighbours on the continent, in particular with our rivals the French, whose maxims

† Estimate, p 25.

and policy are so greatly extolled in the Estimate *, we have no reason to grant, that we are destitute of the means of self-defence in the genius and principles of those of higher rank.

WHAT cause have the British nobility and gentry given their countryman to imagine, they have less military honour and public spirit than the French? A few individuals may behave ill. Both French and British officers have turned their backs; the French as often, and as dishonourably, as the British. But what is this to either of the nations? or must our officers in general be therefore reckoned stupid or cowardly? Either of the nations may produce greater men in every profession at some particular times than at others. But from nothing, that has happened of late, have we just ground to establish an uniform preference in favour of the French. A British army at present will not be afraid to meet the French in any field with equal numbers. They will dare to fight them, tho the number of the French be superior. Our seamen of every rank are at least equal to those of the French, both in skill and courage. Our troops shew undoubted bravery in battle. The intrepidity of the British officers at the battle of Fon-

* Estimate, page 141.

GENIUS AND CAPACITY 177

tenoy has been celebrated by a foreigner *. It is allowed by the writer of the Estimate, that the French manners are as vain and effeminate as our own †. It is one of his maxims, that “where effeminacy and selfish vanity form the ruling character of a people, those of high rank and quality will, in general, be of all others most vain, most selfish, most incapable, most effeminate ‡.” Why, therefore, should it be imagined, that French generals, admirals, or ministers, must be superior to British?

As there was no just ground for admiring the conduct of the French, even when their affairs appeared most prosperous, in the year 1757; after they had over-run the elec-

* In the History of the War of 1741, ascribed to Monsieur Voltaire.

† This historian, besides applauding in general the courage of the British troops, observes, that in time of action the officers behaved with great calmness and composure; that they called to the French to fire; that the troops advanced slowly, as if they had been going thro' their exercises; and that the majors were seen laying their canes to the guns of the soldiers to cause them to level them in the proper manner. This battle was fought long within these twenty years, during which period, according to the author of the Estimate (page 117) our effeminacy and debility has been so much increased.

‡ Estimate, page 135.

‡ Ibid. page 130, 131.

torate of Hanover, and other places in Germany ; their being shamefully beaten by the gallant king of Prussia, with such inferior numbers ; their winter campaign in Germany ; the want of discipline among their troops ; their pillaging the countries that were under their power, unlike generous enemies, and contrary to the rules of a fair war ; and their late inglorious flight out of Hanover ; cannot raise our opinion of their councils, generals, or armies, or cause us to agree more readily with the author of the Estimate, in his high conceptions of the wisdom, union, military honour, or bravery, of the French nation.

It is difficult to compare the influence of religion in France and Britain, the spirit and the principles of it differ so widely in the two nations. The religion of France leans so much to superstition and to external ceremony ; that of Britain so much to the pure love of God, and to moral virtue : religion is treated so differently by the Public in the two nations : the French are so much over-awed by an arbitrary court and a tyrannical clergy ; the British, from the mild spirit of their government, and from the happy moderation of their clergy, enjoy so much religious freedom : that in order to determine the force of their religious principles, it is
not

GENIUS AND CAPACITY 179

not safe in this, nor indeed, in any other case, to trust solely to *external appearances* of devotion.

As to the *real* quantity of piety and of virtue, it is impossible to *calculate* it at any time. At one time external appearances may be very decent; there may be great gravity and solemnity in *the looks*; the outward forms of devotion may be observed with zeal, while religion has not taken firm possession of *the heart*. That sort of religion which flourished during the reign of Charles I. when, to the great disquiet of the nation, the influence of the court was exerted to support and to impose modes and ceremonies in worship, is not much applauded by any party at present. Nor do we admire that enthusiasm, which prevailed under the administration of Oliver Cromwel. It is common now-a-days to represent such flaming appearances of zeal as hypocritical. On the other hand, it is certain, that there may be many lively sentiments of piety in the heart, under a less religious appearance. So that it is, perhaps in truth, more than any man can determine, whether there is not in Britain, at present, as much *real piety and virtue*, as were in it at any point of time since the Reformation. If the impressions of religion seldom appear so fervent in the present age,

I 6

they

they seem to be more universal, than in former periods. Mankind often mean well, even when their external appearance is not irreproachable. They may inwardly love piety and virtue, and may observe the more important duties of life, at the same time that they comply too much with the looser modes and fashions in things esteemed less substantial. What is by some imputed to vanity, to luxury, and to selfish effeminacy, may often, no doubt, be attributed to a social taste, to a friendly disposition, or to love of elegance improperly displayed. As the appearances of piety and virtue under a graver form are sometimes hypocritical, so when the better sort of a nation are not profligate, nor abandoned to wickedness, which is confessed to be the case at present *, amidst luxury and refined sensuality there may be more solid piety and virtue, than is commonly believed.

THE writer of the Estimate, hath been too hasty in his censure of lord Verulam. " Lord Verulam (says he) hath somewhere observed, that *times of atheism are civil times*. He had been much nearer the truth had he affirmed that *civil times were times of atheism*. He mistook the cause for the effect †. " It hath escaped this

* Estimate, page 26. † Ibid. page 165.

writer, that lord Verulam hath made this very observation. " Learned ages (says this great philosopher) especially if peaceable and prosperous, are reckoned among the causes of atheism †." If this observation is just, it may help in some measure to account for that impiety, which is complained of in the present age. For, notwithstanding the complaints made by the author of the Estimate * ; notwithstanding all its defects, the present must be allowed to be a *learned* age. But be this as it will, the great lord Verulam makes another observation, which no religious doctor will deny, that " a smattering of natural philosophy inclines men to atheism, when a deeper knowledge of nature brings them about to religion †." Whence

† Causæ atheismi sunt : divisiones circa religionem, si plures fuerint ; nam unica divisio zelum utriusque partis adauget : verum numerosæ atheismum introducunt. Alia causa sunt scandala sacerdotum ; cum eo res redeat quo innuit S. Bernardus ; Non est jam dicere, Ut populus, sic sacerdos ; quia nec sic populus ut sacerdos. Tertia est, consuetudo profana ludendi et jocandi in rebus sanctis, quæ sensim reverentiam religionis atterit. Postremo ponuntur, secula erudita, præsertim cum pace et rebus prosperis conjuncta.

Verulam. Sermones si'cles, De atheismo.

* Estimate, page 41, 42, 43, 86.

† Verum est tamen, parum philosophiæ naturalis homines inclinare in atheismum, at altiore scientiam eos ad religionem circumagere. *Verulam. Ibid.*

Quin potius certissimum est, atque experientia comprobatum, leves gustus in philosophia movere fortasse ad

we may conclude, notwithstanding the complaints of the irreligion of the times, that, since natural philosophy has been of late remarkably cultivated and improved in Britain, this deeper knowledge has imprinted a deep sense of the Divinity upon the minds of many.

WITHOUT the imputation of bigotry, it may likewise be affirmed, that the protestant religion may be expected to have at least as powerful an influence in Britain, as popery has in France, to inspire its votaries with the love of whatever is great or good. It is said, indeed, that “despotism arms it-
“ self with terror; and, by checking the
“ open and avowed profession, checks,
“ in a certain degree, the progress of im-
“ piety †.” But whatever effects despotism may have on the *profession* of religion, the establishment of freedom must have equal or better effects in promoting *real virtue* and *piety*. And, tho’ “opinion having its course” is said to be a “bad disease,” it is confessed at the same time, that the cure would be fatal *. Whence it may justly be maintained, that, notwithstanding the advantages accruing to religion from the despotism of France, there may be at least as much real virtue and piety, of consequence, religious atheismum, sed pleniores haustus ad religionem reducere. *Verulam. De Augment. Scient. lib. i.*

† Estimate, page 169.

* Ibid. page 170.

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 183

principles may last as long, in Britain, as in France; tho the author of the Estimate seems to be of another opinion †.

He endeavours to shew, * that modern Popery is in danger of overwhelming modern Protestantism. He sets forth the fast hold, which the church of Rome takes of its members by the tremendous penalty it denounces against any departure from its principles. He represents the active genius and the fiery spirit of the Romish religion; the passion and fury, with which it inflames its votaries; the advantages, which it derives from the vices of mankind; the assistance which it receives from the secular arm; the coolness and indifference of many protestants both in Great Britain and in America; the zeal of the Romish priests in making proselytes, and in urging their party to make them; the strength which this zeal will acquire even from the benevolent passions of mankind, on account of the *supposed* merit of the Popish faith; the premiums which are openly given in England to influence conversions to Popery; the increase of the number of Papists in Holland: and, to conclude the whole, he sets before us the present combination of the Popish powers against the

† Estimate, page 169.

* In his second Volume, page 127.

King of Prussia; a combination which he attributes in a great measure to bigotry, and to a permanent uniformity of principles, working in our days the same effects as they did formerly, when the Elector Palatine was driven out of his dominions.

Thus, he warns us of our danger, and tho, perhaps, every good Protestant may not see it in so strong a light, or be as much alarmed as this writer, he will undoubtedly join with him, most heartily, in his inference, " That we ought to be most watchful in the preservation of the invaluable blessing of Protestantism, and active in the support of those who are its great supports."

SENSIBLE at the same time, that nothing can so much quench our ardour as despondency, he expressly cautions against it, and observes, that the danger from popery ought to strike us only with awe, not with despondency. To rouse our courage he displays the great personal abilities and success of the King of Prussia, whose remarkable victories ought surely to give great joy to every true Protestant and true Briton.

BUT, besides that confidence, which may arise from particular alliances, or from the wisdom

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 185

wisdom and valour of a single man; if we consider either the matter or the form of the two religions, and the present state and temper of Christendom, the Protestant religion will appear to have some very material advantages, and Popery to be exposed to many dangers; from which, as they arise out of its peculiar system, Protestantism seems to be altogether secure.

IN the struggle betwixt these two systems, it cannot but be of great benefit to Protestantism, that truth and reason are on its side. 'Tis true, they do not prevail in every case. Yet, as it is always an advantage to have a good cause, so in a long contest the truth and reason, that are to be found in Protestantism, may well be expected to prove a match, if not an over-match, for the falsehood, impostures, nonsense, superstition, blind, passionate and furious zeal, which are so remarkable in Popery.

BESIDES the internal weakness of Popery, several external accidents may happen in the ordinary course of affairs, as the result of causes which are deeply founded in the nature of man; and may gradually pave the way for the destruction of Popery.

NOT-

NOTWITHSTANDING the religious zeal, which may be observed in Popish countries, it is visible, there is often an inclination in the Princes, as well as others, of the communion of the Church of Rome, to seize part of the exorbitant revenues of the Clergy, and either to add them to their own revenues, or to employ them in encouraging trade and manufactures, to which of late most of the nations in Europe seem to be greatly turned. There is likewise a disposition in many of the better sort of the Laity to curb the tyranny of the Priests, and to prevent their impositions upon the people. A strong spirit of this kind has appeared lately, and still subsists in France; and, as it is a *natural* consequence of that *light*, which has been diffused by the *Reformation* even over the Popish countries, it may be expected to increase. In an age, in which such a social intercourse is established betwixt Popish and Protestant nations, and so much knowledge is propagated from some of them to others, it will be difficult for the Romish priests to prevent the consequences of this free communication and increase of knowledge. The effects of it are felt already. If there are among the Great many Protestants, who are cool or indifferent about religion, there are many Papists in the same rank as indifferent on their side. In a learned, critical, and incredulous

incredulous age, some false miracles, of which they are still obliged to support the credit, will do them much mischief one time or another. Contests about privileges must naturally arise betwixt the Popish Princes and the Ecclesiastics. In those disputes, notwithstanding the deepest and most crafty policy of the conclave, the Clergy will generally be obliged to yield. This will gradually weaken the power of the Church, and at last be fatal to popery. Popery is not such an impregnable system, as is imagined by many. Protestants have no reason to think their cause desperate, but ought to go on courageously in the struggles with this mystery of iniquity.

As for Great Britain and Ireland, in particular, tho the author of the Estimate hath assured us, that there is in England one Gentleman who openly gives five pounds to every proselyte to the Roman church, besides the additional bribe of a Sunday's dinner to every such person as attends mass, and that allurements of the same kind are known to prevail in most parts of the kingdom, and that even among those of the highest rank, a fact, in which, it is hoped, he may be mistaken; tho he might have added, what seems to be of much greater consequence, that there is a greater number of

Papists

Papists than Protestants in Ireland; yet the apprehension of losing the revenues of the antient popish church, which are now in the possession of Protestants; the exclusion of papists from all places of power or profit, while they are suffered to live privately in ease and quiet; the risk, which they must run, if they were to attempt any thing against the Protestant religion; and the general calmness and social spirit of our times, promise a greater security to Protestantism within the King's dominions, than the zeal of the priests, or of a few of the laity, or any number of profelytes, who can be supposed to be gained to Popery in England, among the lowest of the people, by bribes of five pounds, and of Sunday dinners, can reasonably be apprehended to counterbalance.

It ought indeed to be lamented, that Popery can be supposed to be increasing in any part of Britain. Its growth ought to be prevented by all honest and lawful means. The ministers of religion, in particular, ought to lay it seriously to heart. By a rational and pious zeal in behalf of so pure and virtuous a *religion*, as the protestant, they will not only do great service to mankind, but recommend themselves to the esteem of the world, and rescue their character and order from

GENIUS AND CAPACITY 189

from any contempt that can be supposed to be thrown upon it.

GREAT complaints have, indeed, been made by the author of the Estimate, as if the clergy were much contemned. Perhaps such complaints do not come with the greatest propriety from gentlemen of this order. The decency in which many of them live; the dignity which they maintain; the character which they are well entitled to possess; these will ever prevent the order itself from falling into contempt. Complaints of this kind by clergymen ought always to be distinguished by the modesty with which they are made, as well as by the justice which accompanies them. It will often, no doubt, be fully as proper to leave them to be made by the laity; from whom they are in a peculiar manner graceful, and may be supposed to come with as happy an influence. But whether they come from the one or the other, they are, in some measure, just. The Clergy are surely *less* respected than they *ought to be*. Worthy clergymen are too often contemned by such as are neither so good, nor so wise, as themselves. Yet it can scarce be admitted, that this contempt is so general, as the author of the Estimate apprehends. Indeed, if the greatest part of them resemble those politer ones,

ones, among whom, he says, “ it is grown
 “ a fashionable thing to despise the duties of
 “ their parish, to wander about, as the va-
 “ rious seasons invite, to every scene of false
 “ gaiety, to frequent and shine in all public
 “ places, their own pulpits excepted ; or, if
 “ their age and situation set them above
 “ these puerile amusements, they slumber in
 “ a stall, haunt levees, or follow the gain-
 “ ful trade of election-jobbing * ; ” we
 need not wonder that they are contemned by
 both good and bad. But, it is to be hoped,
 there are only a few who deserve this charac-
 ter. It is to be hoped, that the writer has
 been misled by one or two examples, with
 which he has unfortunately happened to be
 acquainted, to be too severe upon this order,
 as well as on other professions ; and that the
 generality of the clergy both are, and deserve
 to be, honoured and respected. Notwith-
 standing the strongest efforts of sceptics and
 freethinkers, it is probable the clergy will
 not fall into general contempt. Indeed,
 such as are vicious ; such as in a free prote-
 stant country set up too high claims to au-
 thority in matters of religion ; such as de-
 mand too great regard *merely* on account of
 their *gown and band* : or such as are *con-
 ceited, proud, insolent, and overbearing*, and

* Estimate, page 84, 85.

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 191

allow no virtue in *any man* who will not *blindly submit to their order*, may, perhaps, be despised. And, if men of so exceptionable a character should be much contemned, it is none of the worst signs of an age. It is not surely a proof, either that the profession of a clergyman is generally contemned, or that religion has lost its influence in the world. But to proceed.

THE author of the Estimate will needs maintain, that tho the manners of the French are as vain, as selfish, and as effeminate, as those of the British, the French have greatly the advantage of us in respect of national defence. And for this he offers his reasons. But, on examination, these reasons will be found weak ; and some of them must *sound oddly* in the ears of a true Briton.

FIRST we are told, that the effeminacy of the French does not, like that of the British, affect their national capacity ; because their
“ youth are assiduously trained, up for all
“ public offices, civil, naval, military, in
“ schools provided at the public expence, and
“ the candidates for public employ go thro’
“ a severe and laborious course of discipline *.”

* Estimate, page 135, 136.

THAT

THAT there are such schools in France, and that they are on a better footing than any of the same kind in Britain, will not, perhaps, be denied. Nor will any impartial man maintain, that the French do not discover a superior skill in several branches of their police. But tho one should be willing to do them justice, it is hardly possible to avoid observing, that the writer of the Estimate lays a greater weight upon the institution of their schools, than it will bear.

IN a nation where the manners are vain and effeminate, it is scarce to be thought that the youth of better fashion will be obliged to go through a very severe and laborious course of discipline; at least, that any course of discipline, through which they can be supposed to go when they are young, will be able to prevent the bad effects of effeminate manners, with which they are surrounded as soon as they appear in the world. In fact, the extraordinary effects of this severe discipline are seldom to be felt by experience. The British will meet the French with equal numbers either by sea or by land.

No doubt, a course of proper discipline, such as we read of during some periods among some of the ancient nations, the Spartans, for instance, and the Romans, will do much to
inspire

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 193

inspire valour and patriotism. But we have no reason to entertain the same high opinion of a French education. A vain, luxurious, selfish, and effeminate people can scarce be supposed capable of directing a proper education : nor can their country be a proper scene for it. French education is certainly very defective. But tho' it were better than it is, it is not *sufficient* for fitting the youth to be generals, admirals, or ministers of state. When we search after proper persons to direct public councils, or to command armies and fleets (and this is what the author of the Estimate is in quest of) we shall find that a French education goes but a little way towards forming them. In truth, it is not education, it is nature, which must qualify men for such important offices. Educate a coward, or a silly man, how you will, you will never make him a Marlborough. In order to make a statesman or a general, besides genius, honesty, activity, and courage, observation and experience are necessary. If our countrymen behave ill, it is not because in general we are worse educated than the French : our bad behaviour ought to be imputed to causes which operate on them as much as on us.

2. It is pleasant to find it given as another reason, why the effeminacy of the

K
French

French manners affects not their national capacity, that "the youth in France only expect to rise in station, as they rise in knowledge and ability *." Perhaps the British youth form the same expectations. One may venture to say, they have as good reason to do so. But the French as well as the English youth will find themselves disappointed, when they come out into the world. The kings of France cannot, any more than those of Britain, see every thing with their own eyes. It will be impossible for them to know the personal merit of every one they employ. They must trust to their ministers. If the manners of the court of France are, as they are confessed to be, as vain and effeminate as those of the court of Britain, why should not the caprice of a favourite, the affection of a minister for his relations and friends, the intrigues he must enter into to support himself against the plots of his rivals, or even indolence, sloth, and luxury, as often pervert his choice in procuring commissions and offices, as the like causes will pervert a minister in England? It is said the power of our parliaments gives rise to dangerous factions in Britain. But there may be, nay, in truth there are, as violent factions, as base and unmanly in-

* Estimate, page 136.

trigues,

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 195

trigues, in order to obtain the good graces of a king of France, as there can be in Britain to obtain a parliamentary interest, and recommendations to favour. In fact, it will be found, that there are as foolish and as unworthy promotions in the one country as in the other.

AGAIN, 3. the warlike spirit of the French nobility, and the principle of military honour, are said to prevent the dangerous effects of their effeminate manners. "Tho
" commerce (says the author of the Estimate)
" is encouraged in France, it is chiefly
" encouraged among the commons: while the
" people are allured to trade by every kind
" of motive, and allowed to reap the chief
" profits of it, the noblesse or gentry are in
" honour prohibited from commerce*." The leading ranks in France are not so rich, as in England; and, being discouraged from trading, their poverty drives them to the profession of arms as the necessary means of support†. Hence the French are both a commercial and a warlike nation. The effeminacy of their manners is corrected, and the danger arising from it much prevented, by the greater remainder of military genius.

* Estimate, page 205.

† Ibid. page 204.

IN this representation there are some things, which cannot be contested. Indeed, the British reckon themselves happy, that they cannot dispute the truth of them. The gentlemen of France go into the army more frequently, than the gentry in England. The English are not under the same necessity as the French: the gentry and nobility are rich, and the profession of a merchant is honourable among the former. No ministry nor favourite of the king can make them uneasy, tho they live at home upon their estates, and neither go themselves nor send any of their family to the court or to the army. The French noblesse are poor. It is reckoned dishonourable for them to trade. Should they decline going to the court, or entering into the army, the court has many methods of distressing them. So they must fly to the army for their support and protection. But this does not render a French superior to a British army. Indeed, the British ought rather to be preferred, since its leaders are not more selfish, more vain, or more effeminate, than those of the French; and the private men in the British service must be confessed to be better, the commons in Britain being at least equally courageous, and generally more robust and high-spirited, than those of France.

THERE is another respect, indeed, in
which

which the French have the advantage. Their armies are more numerous ; and to this, rather than to any superior bravery, their success in the late war is to be ascribed. In this respect it is not proposed to make a comparison. The British will yield to their rivals the honour of having such great armies : they prefer the arts of peace : their Government consults their happiness, and does not, like the French, employ them in frequent wars without necessity *. The great armies in France are a heavy burden upon the people ; the British, being surrounded by the sea, stand not in need of such defenders : but if at any time the Government wants an army, it is able to raise one, and abundance of the nobility and gentry are ready to court military employments, and fairly to dispute the honours of the field with any of the armies of France.

4. IF the French, therefore, are better secured, than the British, against the danger of their vain and effeminate manners, it must chiefly be by the despotic power of the king. It is this, which, according to the author of the Estimate, aided by the principle of military honour, secures the natural spirit of union. The monarch's power gives unity

* Estimate, page 205.

and steadiness to every movement of the state *. In a country where freedom is established, and manners lost through the exorbitance of wealth, the duration of religious principles can be but short. Despotism arms itself with terror; and, by checking the open and avowed profession, checks, in a certain degree, the progress of impiety: whereas it must be acknowledged and lamented as one of the unalterable defects of a free government, that opinion must have its course †. The national spirit of union is naturally strong in absolute monarchies: in free countries it is naturally weak ‡. The restraints laid on the royal prerogative at the Revolution, and the accession of liberty thus gained by the people, added to our parliaments a new dignity and power. Hence the members, sensible of their influence, make demands on the crown; and the constituents, sensible of their influence, make demands on their representatives. Thus the lowest cobbler presses on the minister. If the different claimants are vested with lucrative employments, the wheels of government run smooth. If any large body of claimants are dissatisfied, the political uproar begins, and public measures are obstructed or overturned. Thus the grand chain of political inter-

* Estimate, page 140.

† Ibid. page 169, 170.

‡ Ibid. page 103,

est has been formed. The origin of making parliaments is to be traced from the reign of king William III. but the art at that time was but in its infancy. The system gathered strength by degrees. The grand chain of political self-interest has been at length compleated, and a foundation laid in our principles and manners for endless dissensions in the state. Thus, faction is established among us. But these mischiefs are much prevented in France by the despotic power of the monarch *. In this manner does the author of the Estimate set forth the disadvantages of British freedom, and the advantages of despotic power in France.

OF one thing, however, so far as I have observed, he hath omitted to take notice, namely, that the exorbitant trade and wealth, which he confesses we possess at present †, are owing to the security and liberty, which the nation gained at the Revolution above what they had enjoyed in the preceding period. Tho this did not occur to this writer, it is, indeed, the truth. And by adding this circumstance to those which he hath observed, the series will stand connected as follows: By the Revolution we have gained

* Estimate, page 107—123. † Ibid. page 209.

security and liberty : security and liberty have produced an *exorbitant trade and wealth* : this wealth hath very near destroyed the principles of religion, honour, and public spirit, and hath prodigiously corrupted our manners. Bad manners, when there is nothing sufficient to give check to their natural consequences, must first enervate, and then ruin, a nation. One of these principal checks is the despotic power of the king. This has a happy effect in France, to secure the nation against the dangers arising from their luxury and effeminacy. We have not this advantage in Britain. Formerly our kings had certain prerogatives, which might have been useful in this respect ; but we have lost these advantages since the Revolution, by the restraints which were laid on the royal prerogative at that time. Hence, there being now nothing in our constitution to give due check to our bad manners, their natural consequences must have their full effect, and we run the greatest risk of going to destruction. This seems to be the state of the case, according to the writer of the Estimate.

In all this I am far from accusing this gentleman of any intention to cast black and odious colours on the Revolution, or of being unfriendly to the dignity and powers of our parliaments, and to the liberty of the people

people of Britain. I only take notice of the *consequences* of certain principles, but shall be far from supposing the writer was sensible of these consequences. An author, out of love to his country, and from an honest indignation against the depravity of its manners, in assigning the sources of this depravity may unawares suffer expressions to drop from his pen, which may bear hard upon that very system which himself espouses. It is not uncommon even for doctors to write inconsistently, and to lay down positions, from which dangerous consequences may fairly be inferred. But in most cases, it is unfair to impute to any man consequences which he does not acknowledge, or which are contrary to his open declarations. Such an imputation cannot but do harm both to the man who is guilty of it, and to the cause which he defends.

THE writer of the Estimate applauds the spirit of liberty, and the struggles it maintained formerly with the tyrants of the times *. He allows the rebellion in the year 1745 to have been mischievous †; acknowledges, that the friends of liberty are

* Estimate, p. 18.

† Ibid. page 92.

the friends of Britain †; and confesses, that our constitution is of a superior nature to that of France *. Out of affection and regard to such a constitution, tho he thinks "opinion's" "having a free course" is a "bad disease," yet he declares against any attempt to cure the disease, because it is an unalterable defect of a free government †. Tho he has conceived a bad opinion of the present age, and formed the most frightful ideas of the dangers arising from a free government, except in simple and virtuous times †, yet he declares for a free government even in our degenerate times,

Thus, he appears a *generous* friend to liberty, and a determined enemy to despotism, At the same time he is greatly mistaken concerning the dangers which he supposes to arise from the one, and the blessed effects which he ascribes to the other.

Of all this gentleman's errors, this is surely the most unlucky and the most dangerous. He hath fallen into other mistakes. There are few professions, perhaps, to which he hath wholly done justice. In general, he is too severe in his reproofs: but such er-

† Estimate, p. 91.

* Ibid. p. 218.

† Ibid. p. 170.

† Ibid. p. 108.

rors are more harmless ; they may even be attended with some accidental benefit. If such exaggerated representations of vicious and effeminate manners do not drive the nation to despair, they may serve to awaken it. No benefit, indeed, can arise from the advantageous light in which he places French councils and generals. This rather tends to intimidate our armies in time of war. Yet it is probable it will do little harm, as our foldiers, not acknowledging the superiority of the French, will not trust to his opinion, nor be frightened by romantic displays of French heroism. But the views which he he gives his countrymen, of the dangers arising from liberty, and of the advantages of the French despotism, not only tend to excite a distaste of liberty, to reconcile the minds of the people to despotic power, and to beget an admiration of absolute monarchy in general, but may, in particular, be expected to have a bad influence at this time, if the nation shall suffer any considerable losses in the present war. It is necessary, therefore, to expose such a dangerous mistake, and to provide an antidote against the fatal poison.

It is true, if this gentleman's assertions concerning the consequences of liberty and despotism are sound, there is no help for it.

We must stand to them. But happily this is not the case, and the writer's ideas on this subject are wholly visionary.

For what reason should it be thought, that, except in virtuous times, the power and dignity of parliaments, and the liberty of the people, must be so dangerous, and that despotic power in the prince must be so useful to prevent the bad consequences of effeminate manners, since this effeminacy has at least as great influence on the prince and his power, as on any thing else? Effeminacy must principally affect those in higher life. It especially infects the court and the officers of the army. The prince cannot see every thing with his own eyes : he cannot govern entirely by himself : he must be informed by his courtiers : his measures must be much directed by his ministers. The manners of these gentlemen, it is confessed, are vain, selfish, and effeminate. This must corrupt their schemes and administration. The power of the king, be it ever so great, must be employed to support and execute the effeminate and selfish schemes of an effeminate and selfish ministry. Why, therefore, should the king's *despotic* power give so great security against the bad consequences of selfish and effeminate manners? Instead of giving check to the evil, despotic power tends much rather

ther to prevent all hopes or possibility of a remedy to such a dangerous malady.

IN the constitution of France there are not any effectual resources in a state of corruption. The king's absolute power crushes all who oppose the foolish and pernicious projects of his corrupted ministers. The British constitution has a manifest advantage in this respect. Corruption may creep in among the people; it may gather strength by degrees. Times of inward peace, opulence, and security, such as we have enjoyed since the Revolution, may unfortunately carry this corruption to a great height. The love of money is the root of all evil *. Too high a value for life, and too small a sense of honour, are equally base and dangerous. It must be confessed, all the three prevail too much at present. Corruption, no doubt, may rise so high, as to overpower whatever would resist it. Thus, no nation, no constitution is absolutely secure. But, if there are effectual remedies against destruction in any, they are to be found in the British, constitution. In France there is nothing that can make head against the wicked intentions, destructive negligence, or fatal stupidity of a wicked and effeminate court. But in Bri-

* 1 Timothy, vi. 10.

tain the voice of the middle ranks among the people has a mighty influence. These are always the last to be corrupted. In their integrity and activity there is a grand resource. When those in higher life are sunk in depravity and effeminacy, if there is any genius or honesty left in the nation, and scarce can any civilized people be supposed wholly destitute of either of them, the cry and influence of this part of the people will often be able to find them out and bring them into play. Our constitution, therefore, having such a high mixture of freedom, is better fitted, than the despotism of France, to preserve us from destruction.

BUT, God be thanked ! there is no necessity to have recourse to extraordinary remedies. Our most gracious sovereign, who is so justly beloved by his people, with the assistance of the legislature, is fully able to support the nation against the power of France. The brave and virtuous part of the people ought not to lose their courage, or to despair of the cause of their country.

THE nation (says the author of the Estimate) “ stands aghast at its own misfortunes ; but, like a man starting suddenly from sleep by the noise of some approaching ruin, knows neither whence
“ it

“ it comes, nor how to avoid it †.” Here we have a lively image; the simile is fine; nothing is wanting but solidity. One would think the French had not only made themselves masters of the plains of America, but had beat us on the plains of Salisbury, and were marching fast to London to pillage a defenceless capital *. But, in place of such remarkable defeats, hitherto, if the advantage is not on our side, the losses are pretty equally balanced between the two nations †, that of Minorca alone excepted. By the loss of this important island, the conquest of our forefathers since the Revolution, we have not only lost an useful station for our ships, but, which is of greater moment, have suf-

† Estimate, page 149, 150.

* The author of the Estimate seems apprehensive of some such event. He ought not to be blamed. Would to God, every Britain was awakened out of security, and believed a French invasion and the rout of a British army in Britain, events that are far from being impossible; and from a sense of this would submit to every measure proper to prevent the danger. Then should we be as safe against all foreign invasions, as we are now from internal commotions.

† If it be true, as seems very probable, that we have greatly hurt the French trade; that the insurance upon French ships is very high; that the French finances are much incumbered; and that the French government cannot borrow money for double of the interest, at which our government may have it in Britain; the advantage, perhaps, will be found on our side, notwithstanding the loss of Minorca, and of some of our forts and back settlements in America.

ferred in our national honour. Yet there is no reason why we should despond, or apprehend universal ruin. Excepting the case of Minorca, we have been rather *disappointed* in our expectations of success against the enemy, than met with any considerable defeat or actual calamity.

IN religion, when a sinner despairs of mercy, his condition is desperate: while he sinks under the weight of his sins, he is incapable of repentance. There is a resemblance in the condition of a whole people. To aggravate national calamities, national vices, or national weaknesses, does not become a patriot. It is nobler far, and more useful, for the people of Britain to imitate the firmness and magnanimity of the Roman state. After the entire destruction of their army at the battle of Cannæ (a misfortune so great, that nothing but the total rout of a British by a French army near the metropolis of the island could be compared to it) this magnanimous people thanked their consul, that he had not despaired of the common-wealth *. To promote such a cou-

* Nec tamen hæ clades defectionesque sociorum moverunt, ut pacis unquam mentio apud Romanos fieret; neque ante consulis Romam adventum, nec postquam is rediit, renovavitque memoriam acceptæ cladis. Quo in tempore ipso adeo magno animo civitas fuit, ut con-

rageous spirit, to prevent a baleful despondency, and not to justify any ill-concerted

fuli, ex tanta clade, cujus ipse causa maxima fuisset, redeunti, et obvium itum frequenter ab omnibus ordinibus sit, et gratiæ actæ quod de republica non desperasset. *Tit. Liv. Lib. xxii. cap. 61.*

There were some, however, among that courageous people, who, struck with the greatness of the calamity, and despairing of being able to defend their country against the superior genius of Hannibal and the Carthaginians, were deliberating about abandoning Italy, and about sheltering themselves ingloriously in the territories of some of the neighbouring monarchs; preferring a mean, slavish, and precarious life, under a tyrant, to freedom, or a glorious death in defence of their country. But the brave Scipio soon put an end to such cowardly resolutions. The account is from Livy, and deserves to be read in the beautiful original.

Quibus consultantibus inter paucos de summa rerum nunciat P. Furius Philus consularis viri filius; "Ne-
" quicquam eos perditam spem fovere: desperatam
" comploratamque rem esse publicam. Nobiles juve-
" nes quosdam, quorum principem L. Cæcilium Me-
" tellum, mare et naves spectare, ut, deserta Italia, ad
" regum aliquem transfugerent." Quod malum, præ-
" terquam atrox, super tot clades etiam novum, quum
" stupore et miraculo torpidos defixisset, et, qui aderant
" concilium advocandum censerent; negat concilii rem
" esse Scipio juvenis, fatalis dux hujusce belli. " Auden-
" dum atque agendum, non consultandum, ait, in tan-
" to malo esse. Irent secum extemplo armati, qui rem-
" publicam salvam vellent. Nullo verius, quam ubi ea
" cogitentur, hostium castra esse." Pergit ire, sequen-
" tibus paucis, in hospitium Metelli. Et quum concilium
" ibi juvenum, de quibus allatum erat, invenisset, stricto
" super capita consultantium gladio, " Ex mei animi sen-
" tentia," inquit, " ut ego rempublicam populi Ro-
" pusil-

pusillanimous measures or conduct, hath the author of these characteristics taken upon him to offer some reflections on the state of the Public.

AT the same time he will be far from either deluding or seducing the people, and saying "Peace, peace, where there is no peace *." As with lies he will not make "the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad, so neither will he strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life †." God knows, there is enough of irreligion, luxury, vanity, selfish effeminacy, stupidity, and cowardice, to awaken the concern of every true patriot, and to shew the necessity of correcting our errors. Especially those of higher rank ought to exert themselves to recover their own honour and the

"mani non deferam, neque alium civem Romanum deferere patiar. Si sciens fallo, tum me, Jupiter Optime Maxime, domum, familiam, remque meam pessimo leto afficias! In hæc verba, L. Cæcili, jures, potulo, cæteræque, qui adestis: qui non juraverit, in se hunc gladium strictum esse sciat." Haud secus pavidi, quam si victorem Hannibalem cernerent, jurant omnes: custodiendosque semetipfos Scipioni tradunt.

Tit. Liv. Lib. xxii. cap. 53.

* Ezekiel, xiii. 10.

† Ezekiel, xiii. 22.

honour of the nation. From the Estimate, which has gone through so many editions, and from other writings, they may learn, how multitudes are disposed to think of their conduct. Would they retrieve their character, would they regain the good opinion of their country, they must make a vigorous use of the riches and strength of the nation. The time is not too late. Tho engaged in a war against a powerful enemy, we have many resources. Great as the power of France must be acknowledged to be, it must be much greater than it is ; effeminate as we are represented, we must be much more effeminate than we are, before the French can expect to conquer this island. The British ought not to despise their enemy. Yet when we consider our situation, in an island, the greatness of our naval power, that our enemies dare hardly ever meet us in open sea, can only infest our trade by privateering, and are obliged to steal their ships of war out of their harbours at such times as they may hope to escape our superior squadrons : when we consider that our island affords us all the necessaries of life in great abundance ; that by domestic industry and foreign commerce we have acquired money, that is, the sinews of war, and are possessed of plenty of arms, and all kinds of military and naval stores ; that we are upon a respectable footing

ing

ing in the East-Indies, and that our colonies in America are far superior to those of the French in wealth and numbers of people : when we consider that there are more than two millions of men in Britain as robust and high-spirited as any in Europe ; that British seamen in general are at least equal, if not superior to the French ; that a body of commanders can be drawn out of our nobility and gentry not more effeminate than their rivals, equal to them in honour, public spirit, and valour : in fine, when it is considered, that, whatever smaller divisions there are among us, we will unite against the French, under a King of known justice and courage, beloved by his people, ready to gratify their desires, and to comply with the proposals made him by his parliament ; so many advantages, in a naval war, create a just confidence, that, notwithstanding some disappointments to our just expectations at the beginning of it, the superiority will at last be found to be greatly on our side.

To all the advantages already mentioned, I shall add another, which is of the greatest consequence ; and with it I shall conclude all that I intended. The French are all subjected to the despotic, uncontrollable power of an arbitrary monarch. We are free under the protection of law. Instead of
looking

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 213

looking on despotism as an advantage to them, or on freedom as a disadvantage to us, we ought to account our liberty as a mighty advantage on our side both in peace and in war.

I SHALL not enlarge on the superior influence of freedom in promoting arts and sciences, in advancing learning and philosophy, and in encouraging commerce and agriculture. This has been so well and so often explained, that it is now generally confessed by all sorts of writers. I shall only take notice in general, that, if we consider the *nature* and *internal constitution* of free governments, and compare them with despotic monarchies, it will appear, that free states are the only proper nurseries of arts and sciences, and that it is scarce possible they could have arisen under despotic monarchies *. And, if we consult *experience* and the history of the world, we shall find, that the arts *actually* arose under free governments; and that, tho they have been transplanted into absolute monarchies, and have flourished in a certain degree under them, both arts and commerce

* See Mr. Hume's Essay on the Rise and Progress of Arts and Sciences.

have

have flourished most and longest in free nations.

It is more material, in the present question, to consider the influence of freedom in times of war, and to examine the chances of a free government against an absolute monarchy. To make the comparison just, we must not oppose a free government of the best kind to an absolute monarchy of the worst, or a despotic monarchy of the best form to the worst kind of republics; but must suppose each of them to be the best of its kind, or rather to be as good as hath existed, or can reasonably be supposed to exist, in the world, and to be as well governed, and as much free from corruption, as such a government commonly is. Without this precaution we cannot make a proper comparison.

In all political questions it will be difficult to lay down general rules which will hold at all times. In all events, and in all human affairs, there is so great a dissimilarity, that few cases are exactly alike. Much will ever depend upon particular circumstances. At certain times, either a free or a despotic government may suddenly subdue and swallow up the other. A free government may be weak through faction and luxury,

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 215

luxury, while an absolute monarchy is strong by the force and wisdom of some of its institutions, or by the happy genius of its prince or grand vizir.

BUT, abstracting from these particular circumstances, it is essential to the idea of every free government, that the power be not wholly vested in one man, but be distributed among different individuals and different bodies of men. By which means each man's condition approaching much nearer to an equality with that of his neighbours, than can be supposed under an absolute monarchy, and no man being wholly contemptible, such a government may well be called a government, not of men, but of laws. For general rules, founded on the principles of equity, must be established to regulate the conduct of all the individuals, among whom the administration is distributed. Therefore, under such a constitution there neither is, nor indeed can be, such oppression or arbitrary procedure, as under a despotic monarchy. Every man is not only safer *,

* It is surprising it should be asserted, that a subject in France is as safe as a subject in Britain. " Private property seems to me (says an ingenious author in his Essay of Liberty and Despotism) fully as secure in a civilized European monarchy, as in a republic. " Nor is any danger apprehended in such a government

but may see that his life, his personal liberty, and his property are more secure, than under a despotic monarchy. Hence it will not only be natural for him to feel a greater boldness and firmness of mind, but he has reason to conceive that he has a greater interest in the government, than any man can have under an absolute monarchy. He has stronger motives to love, support, and fight for his country. The attachments to the family, the person, or the glory of the Prince cannot be so powerful under an absolute monarchy, as the *amôr patriæ* under a free constitution. Therefore the subjects of a free government (*cæteris paribus*) must be *more vigorous and more valiant* than those of an absolute prince.

“ from the violence of the sovereign, no more than we
 “ commonly apprehend danger from thunder or earth-
 “ quakes, or any accident the most unusual and extra-
 “ ordinary.” What may be apprehended, I will not
 pretend to say. Mens safety does not depend upon
 what they may apprehend, but on the real nature of
 their condition. One may be in great danger, when
 he does not apprehend it. Whether one is in safety,
 must be determined not from what does, but from what
 may, happen. A subject in France may be merry and
 jovial; but he has not an equal security with a subject
 of Britain, of not being thrown into prison never
 more to be heard of. Tho few are struck dead with
 thunder, yet no man on earth is as safe from thunder
 as if he were above the clouds.

AGAIN

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 217

AGAIN, in a free government, little depends on the character and genius either of any one man, or of a few men. Its wise institutions, customs, and laws must be supposed more steady and durable, and consequently more able to form the people to virtue. Whereas, under an absolute monarchy much will always depend on the genius and abilities of the prince, and of a few of his favourites. A prince, endowed with a mighty genius, may arise; he may be greatly ambitious of true glory, and may be both willing and able to promote the happiness and grandeur of his people. But, if such a monarch had a predecessor of a different character, or if he is succeeded by a weak or vicious prince, so much must be done during a single life, that there will not be sufficient time for training up his subjects to so high a degree of virtue, as may be done easily where the institutions are more durable, and where the laws have a more uninterrupted influence. In the common course of human affairs, a succession of two or three great men is rarely to be seen in any one family. Hardly can it be expected, that a royal education, in an absolute monarchy, should give a better chance to the families of princes.

IF it be said, that absolute monarchs have an advantage over republics, because they can keep their counsels more secret; this will be found more specious than solid. Either those occasions are very rare, in which an absolute secrecy is necessary for the public safety; or, if they occur more frequently, free governments are not incapable of all that secrecy which is needful. A limited royal authority, with certain discretionary powers and prerogatives in the prince, is not inconsistent with the highest freedom. The king may concert the most important designs with one man or with a few. The generals of republics may have as great powers as those of absolute monarchs. There is an advantage, no doubt, in many cases, in a certain degree of secrecy and caution. However, the wisest and best counsels are those which need least to be concealed; and those, who either affect, or need to affect, a mysterious air of secrecy, are certainly the weakest politicians.

THO it is a common objection to free governments, that they are liable to factions, yet in matters of the greatest importance they are upon the whole more steady than absolute monarchies.

UNDER

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 219

UNDER free governments different parties may prevail at different times. One ministry may come in place of another. Plans of less consequence may be altered. Contrary measures may be pursued. But where the chief interests of a nation, or its immediate safety, are at stake, it will be difficult to conceal this from a free people, or to render them indifferent about their most important concerns. What tends either to the immediate ruin of a people on the one hand, or, on the other, to render them secure, is not so difficult to be understood, that a great number in a free nation should not be capable of discerning it, and of pointing it out to their fellow-citizens. In a free country, those who govern, be they many or be they few, must have a regard to the *sense of the people*, and keep their more important interests more steadily in view, than under a government where the voice of the people is less significant.

INSTEAD, therefore, of concluding, that the counsels of an absolute monarchy must be steady, we may conclude, on the contrary, that, where so much depends on the single opinion or caprice of an arbitrary monarch, or of his prime minister, stability of conduct, even in things of the greatest importance, can hardly be expected. The

counsels in such a government must be fluctuating in their own nature ; for absolute governments are liable to sudden changes and violent convulsions. Under free ones, the wisdom, virtue, or activity of one man or party may correct the folly, wickedness, or indolence of another ; an advantage, of which an absolute monarchy is deprived. A wise and an able prince of an active and enterprising temper may sometimes accomplish mighty designs, within his own dominions, of which he is entirely the master. He may sometimes give law to his weaker neighbours. A weak and inactive prince, who succeeds, may, if he chances to have an able minister, follow the plan that has been laid down by the greater genius of his predecessor. But, on the whole, the counsels of a despotic monarchy may be expected to be unstable and uncertain.

If France be cited as an instance of the contrary ; if it be alledged, that this monarchy has pursued a steady plan for aggrandizing the nation. ever since the beginning of the reign of Lewis XIV. if not from that of Henry IV. the answer is easy. It is suggested by Mr. Hume * : “ If the world is still too young to fix many general stable

* Essay of Liberty and Despotism.

truths

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 221

“ truths in politics, which will remain true
“ to the latest posterity ; if we have not as
“ yet had the experience of above three
“ thousand years ; if we want sufficient ma-
“ terials upon which we can reason in the
“ science of politics ; if it is not fully known
“ what degrees of refinement, either in vir-
“ tue or in vice, human nature is susceptible
“ of, nor what may be expected of man-
“ kind from any great revolution in their
“ education, customs, or principles ;” much
less can we form any certain conclusions
from the appearances of the French monar-
chy during only an hundred years.

How soon was an end put to all the grand
designs of Henry IV ! A fatal proof how
little an absolute monarchy can be depended
on.

NOTWITHSTANDING the political admi-
nistration of cardinal Richelieu, the reign of
Lewis XIII. furnishes us with little that
was truly great.

It may be doubted, whether Lewis XIV.
notwithstanding all his institutions for en-
couraging commerce, notwithstanding his
great success in war during forty years, did
not leave France poorer and weaker, than he
found it when he entered on the administra-

tion of the government. According to monsieur de Voltaire, who rather writes a panegyric than a history of this prince, before the peace of Utrecht France was drained of men and money. Some parts of it were ravaged by an hostile army. Versailles was alarmed as well as the rest of the kingdom. It was debated at court, whether the king should retire to Chambort. In short, this historian confesses, that the latter part of the reign of Lewis XIV. was distinguished by calamities *, and that at his death he left debts amounting to one hundred and eighty millions sterling †. So dearly did the French pay for the ambition of this their boasted monarch, and for the victories gained by him during the first part of his reign.

FRANCE has flourished more under his successor, though his genius is not thought so brilliant as that of Lewis XIV. But how soon may a king of France of a different character from that of Lewis XIV. or of Lewis XV. or a prime minister the reverse of Colbert or Fleury, alter the whole face of the French monarchy, and render it as insignificant, as it has lately appeared important, in the scale of nations. France

* Le Siecle de Louis XIV. Tom. i. chap. 22.

† Ibid. Tom. ii. chap. 28.

narrowly escaped being dismembered in the reign of queen Anne. The present dissensions between its parliaments and the clergy, for the most despotic governments cannot prevent parties, may be followed by extraordinary consequences, and excite civil dissensions which no despotic monarch can pacify. The grandeur of the French monarchy can as little be ascertained, as that of other monarchies, which have flourished during a reign or two, and have afterwards sunk into feebleness and contempt. No nation can be assured of eternal empire. All our conjectures concerning such subjects must be extremely uncertain. But if we will examine probabilities, Britain, whether we consider its government, or its situation, bids fairer, than any other, for duration.

If we consult the history of the world, the power and firmness of free governments, and the weakness of despotic monarchies, will appear more manifest. The free states of Greece overthrew the huge armies of Xerxes, and preserved their greatness against all the power of the Persian monarchs. Those despotic princes, who were masters of such extensive dominions, and commanded so many millions of people, did not think themselves safe from the power of the Greeks as long as they

they pursued one common interest. It was, therefore, the policy of the Persian monarchs, by the force of money and by intrigues, to excite quarrels, and to sow jealousies among the Grecian states, that they might not unite to attack the Persian empire. In this disjointed condition, Philip of Macedon gained some advantages over the Greeks, and broke their strength in some degree. But this Philip of Macedon was not an absolute monarch. The Macedonians were considered as *free* men. Their condition was certainly very different from that of the Persians and the other Asiatics, who lived under despotic monarchs. Besides, Philip never pretended to an absolute conquest of the Greek states. He rather affected to be their protector, and their general against the Persians, than their king. He did not weaken them so fully, as not to be despised by the Lacedemonians in the midst of his glory*. His son Alexander was a great conqueror: but, as he was not a despotic monarch, so he fought not against free nations, but against despotic monarchs and their slaves. The

* When he had called all the states of Greece to send deputies to Corinth, the Lacedemonians despised his message. Lacedæmonii et legem et regem contempserunt. JUSTIN, lib. ix. cap. 5.

single city of Tyre, famous for its trade and riches, and situated in an island, made a braver defence, and reduced him to greater perplexities, than all the rest of the Persian empire; so difficult is it for the greatest monarchs, who subdue absolute monarchies with ease, to conquer a maritime power situated in an island. The Roman republic subdued all the absolute monarchies with which it was surrounded. Never was it brought into any real danger, but by the free state of Carthage. It was not conquered at last by any of the neighbouring kings, but by one of its own citizens. While it preserved its freedom, the fiercest and most numerous armies of barbarians, from the northern regions of Europe, could make no impression on its dominions: but, being reduced to a despotic monarchy, this huge empire fell a prey to the posterity of those barbarians. In modern times, the free states in Switzerland have preserved their country and their constitution, in spite of all the absolute monarchs of Europe. About 200 years ago, a few provinces of the Spanish monarchy, being driven to it by oppression, formed themselves into a common-wealth, and, during a long war, withstood the whole power of Spain. In a later period, they bravely defended themselves against Lewis

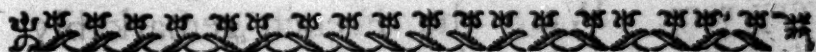
XIV. and baffled all his attempts in the midst of his glory. Absolute monarchs have often subdued one another. The Tartarian Tamerlane, the despotic lords of the Saracens and of the Turks, have over-run great tracts of the earth, and have destroyed feeblér despotic monarchies, corrupted with vice and luxury. But examples of free states falling before absolute monarchies are very rare. Were the French remarkably less corrupted than the British, Britain would have more to fear. But when it is acknowledged, that the manners of the French are as vain and as effeminate, as those of the British, it is not the despotism of France, and the freedom of the British government, that will give the French the advantage. In truth, if we may be allowed to form conjectures about the times or the seasons, and about those grand events, which the great Father of the world hath put only in his own power, it is not Britain, that ought to tremble for fear of France; but France, that ought to dread the bravery and naval strength of the free Britons, if their just indignation should be roused to strike home and avenge the wrongs of their country. God forbid, that so great, so free, so happy a nation, as Britain, should be so impious and so ungrateful towards God, or so

un-

GENIUS AND CAPACITY. 227

unjust to themselves and their posterity, as not to be of good courage, and to behave themselves valiantly for their people and the cities of their God * !

* I Chronicles, xix. 13.



POSTSCRIPT.

When the first Edition of the Characteristicks was published, the writer did not know, who was the author of the three Essays, quoted page 17th of the first Edition, and in several other places of the book. And these Essays, having been published together, in one Pamphlet, in the year 1755. In mentioning them, he used the expression, "The author or the writer of the three Essays." But since that time, being assured by the best authority, that the author of the first Essay, "On the publick debt" was not the author of the second and third Essays; and that there are in the third Essay, "On frugality" things, which are intirely disagreeable to the sentiments of the
author

POSTSCRIPT.

author of the first : the author of the Characteristicks thinks it his duty to acquaint his readers of this fact. As for the second and third Essays, he does not know, whether they were written by the same person or not.



FINIS.

